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CHAMELEONS

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# CHAMELEONS

:

MERELY A MEDLEY OF PROSE POEMS AND  
SHORT STORIES

:

ADI K. SETT

1928,

*Published and Printed*

FOR THE AUTHOR BY B. G. GANDBHIR AT THE  
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## TOUCHING THESE TALES.

These prose poems and short stories have been written by me at all sorts of moments, at all sorts of places and under all sorts of moods. But a great many of them were written when I was wandering, three years back, amongst those passion-tinted valleys of Cashmere. I have written many of these tales in the gardens of Shalimar and Nishat, Achabal and Verinag, secluded in the shadows of a chenar, where Life was a riot of colours and where those marble-faced Punditanis moved, closely veiled in coloured robes, like the phantoms of my dreams, while the vague waters of the brazen fountains whispered in ecstasy. And then I have written these tales during those hot and scorching summer days in Srinagar, while our boat lay moored by a grove of gorgeous poplars or while we were pulled from one length of the Jhelum to the other by a multitude of half-naked, dirty, swarthy Cashmere boatmen, with soft and melancholic songs on their lips. And again I have written some of these tales when I have been far away from the grim realities of Life, in a region of Beauty, when I have brooded in melancholy, in the deep and shadowless night, on the terrace of our house boat, while a few stars glowed like torches.

That particular story which I have called *The Sad Fate of an English Gentleman* is of course not a true story. I wrote it when my imagination ran amok. *The Square of Immortality* was written by me eight years ago, in my student days, in London; it was originally a much longer story and was called *The Hermit's Talisman*. Through the kindness of a friend, who is known for her historical novels, this story was put before the then Editor of the Red Magazine for criticism. I received a letter of congratulations from the Editor in which he said that few boys of the age of sixteen could have written a story in so interesting and intriguing a way. That was the first short story I wrote. Some of these stories have been published in the newspapers of this city and in the journals of Calcutta.

Some of my stories have titles of famous musical compositions. The compositions and the stories have nothing in common. I gave these stories musical titles because I was at a loss to give any suitable titles to them.

Chameleons is the most appropriate title I could give to this collection of stories ; my stories are chameleons.

PEDDER ROAD,  
ROMBAY.

ADI K. SETT



**KOL NIDREI - BRUCH.**

**TO THE BARONESS ORCZY,  
WITH ADMIRATION AND AFFECTION.**

## KOL NIDREI-BRUCH

**T**HEY say that Sudâbah, the second wife to the King Kaikâush of Persia, looked upon her step-son, Siâvaksha, with lust and an evil desire. One day, when her passions arose like the tempestuous waves of some frenzied ocean, she sent an eunuch and bade her step-son come forth to her chamber. She looked with impatience at the door of beaten gold from where the slave had gone. She could not still her heart beats and her eyes sparkled like wondrous beacons. Her head drooped drunkenly on her bosom. She was mad with delight, for she was certain Siâvaksha would give her all his love. She looked at the circular ceiling made of the pale blue Iranian turquoise and the little pieces of solid gold, hammered into the blue of the turquoise flashed upon her maddened senses in all their lustreless brilliance.

Sudâbah looked, as one not of this world, upon the dancing slaves; nor could she hear

the ecstatic sounds of the viols and the cymbals. She was deaf to the world outside her mad lusts and she was dumb with her passion which lay smouldering under her jet black eyes. The colours of the dancing slaves' saris were chaotically mirrored in the little pieces of the crystal which formed the eight sides of the walls.

The door of beaten gold opened and the eunuch preceded Siâvaksha. The gigantic broad shouldered form of the youth was attired in the warrior's costume. His armour clanged as he walked. His long tapering sword, sheathed, set about its hilt with pink beryl-stones, rattled against the steel of his armour. The shape of his rounded thighs could be seen through the tight breeches. The helmet was not on his head and his golden hair fell in beauteous waves about the pink shells of his ears and in glorious ruins on the crown of his head. He looked straight in front of him, with his blue eyes which were bluer than the sea. At his entrance the dancing girls left the room and the door of beaten gold was closed on Sudâbah and her sten-son Siâvaksha.

The Queen arose from her couch of ebony and ivory. The rose petals, spread on the khinkhab for the Queen to repose on, fell in torrents on the tiles of the floor. She stood looking at Siâvaksha, her tall body stretched at its full length and then she was like a magnificent pillar wrought out of ivory and pale pink rose petals. Her bare head with the lustrous black coils was thrown back and her eyes sparkled. She looked upon her stepson strangely, intoxicating lust consumed her evil soul. Her ruby lips were slightly parted and showed her pomegranate mouth with those regular teeth which were like little pearls. A moisture appeared on the vermilion colour of the lips and her entire magnificent form shook tremulously with deep emotion.

The youth stood aghast at the spectacle before him. He had never been alone with his step mother hitherto. She was always veiled. He had looked upon her with reverence, though she was only a few years his senior. But now, unveiled and strangely agitated, Sudâbah stood before him and Siâvaksha was like one dazed. He glared ahead of him with his deep-set, blue eyes. His lips twitched

nervously and he made as if to speak. His face shone with perspiration as streams of moisture flowed freely from his forehead.

A leer appeared on the moist, red lips of the Queen and she looked horrible in all the intensity of her lust. She moved towards her step-son, slowly, looking all the while into his eyes. Very thin, transparent veils penduled from her thighs and about her waist coiled a golden snake in the form of a girdle. The upper part of her body was covered in a blouse of the filmy tissues of silks which revealed her charms. The perfect cups, her beauteous breasts, moved rhythmically with the motion of her body and with arms outstretched she came upon her step-son. She laughed slightly as she touched him with her hands on the steel of his armour and she stood closely touching his body.

"Speak", she softly said, "Speak! wherefore dost thou not speak to me?"

But the youth was dumb with astonishment. Her wild beauty played about his impassioned, impetuous senses and the sore temptation came unto him to tear away the veils which clung so closely to the ivory white of her

body and to caress it. But he passed his hands through his palpitating temples and made as if to speak. Yet he could not do so for his throat was dry and parched.

The woman gazed at him with lust. Her black eyes bewitched him. Her arms were around his neck and she was dragging his face towards her. But the next moment her arms lay in the iron grasp of the youth who held them so tightly that the woman cried out in pain under this exquisite torture. He loosened his hold and her hands fell about her almost helplessly. Then she took one hand of his and placed it on her breast.

“Feel how my heart beats.”

But the youth wrenched his grasp away.

“Siāvaksha, thou art shy? Thou dost not know how I burn with love for thee! Even through my veils I have looked upon thee with eyes of lust and soul of desire. Thy perfect form has maddened me. I long to caress thy naked figure, to put thy head on my lap and rock thee with longing; to kiss thy face till thou canst almost see the marks my mouth hath made.”

And the woman broke down as if with pain. There was a sob and all was silent for a while. Siâvaksha stood in the same position, maddened with what he had heard. His head swam with the intoxication of the Queen's love for him, his eyes were glassy with the moisture about them.

The woman spoke again:

"Oh! Siâvaksha, Oh! thou man of my delight! Wherefore dost thou not speak? Canst thou not see how I consume with passion for thee? Thou tremblest, alas! hast thou loved me in silence too? Rest thy heart, rest thy heart and give me all thou hast, thy love, thy passions, thy life. Join thou all thou holdest dear with me. Look, Siâvaksha, look thou youth of lovely form, look! I stand before thee now in my beauty and I give thee my sweet life and my love. I will fulfil all that thou dost desire. Come", said she drawing him by the hand, "Come and lie with me for a while. Come and Oh, God! Crush me in your arms, torture me, pain me, kill me, but love me—love me Siâvaksha, love me!"

And the woman fell upon her knees to Siâvaksha on the tiled floor and taking hold

of both the legs of the youth, crushed her head between them, till the very pain of her passions made her cry out. She was sobbing. Her sobs echoed and reëchoed in the room of the eight walls. Her proud figure, her majestic bearing had all broken down with her mad passion and she wept for love.

But Siâvaksha, looked coldly at the Queen, his step mother. Her strange bewildering, bewitching words played about like phantoms on his ears and he listened, standing there as one under a frightful dream. But it was all so true. At his feet was the bent figure of Sudâbah, sobbing piteously as she knelt to him.

Then the youth thought of the present and the future and he blushed with shame at the sin he was about to commit. He had been on the brink of Hell. He looked down at the Queen. His hands fell on her shoulders, and the Queen looked up to him, a joyous light in her eyes. But he hated her, hated her till he was ashamed of himself for his intense hate of her. He shook her but yet Sudâbah looked upon him with rejoicing. And then he flung her on the ground as a thing, unclean and vile



and leprous. She fell on the tiles with a thud. Her head collided against them and open-mouthed, she gazed upon him.

“Daughter of Ahriman! Thou vile, disloyal and unclean creature!” screamed Siâvaksha, “thou low born courtesan! How couldst thou speak to me as thou hast done? How couldst thou look upon me with thy evil lust as thou hast done? How couldst thou tempt me to treat my sire disloyally? I spurn thee! I disdain thee! I repulse thee with hatred! Thy dark secret shall be buried within my heart but go thou, woman, go and beg forgiveness and pardon of our Lord Zoroaster. Thou art the chief of ladies and a Queen and I will think of thee as only such”.

The youth had spoken and he was about to go but she clung to him in utter desperation.

“Speak not so, Oh speak not so! Make me a happy woman and I will give thee my all. But if thou shouldst spurn me, I will destroy thy hope of ever reigning.”

Siâvaksha looked at her with scorn and laughed in her face till the woman lowered it with shame.

"Am I afraid of women such as thee? Go thou and bury thy shame and sin. I cannot league with Ahriman and with thee."

And he was gone from out the door of beaten gold.....

That night, when her lord came unto the chamber of the Queen Sudâbah, and as they lay side by side on a bed of sandal, embossed with jewels, she turned unto him, and hanging on his neck, she said:

"Thy son Siâvakasha is evil."

The King looked at her with surprise and asked:

"Wherefore dost thou say this?"

"Oh my lord, my King Kaikâush, thy son saw me unveiled today. He hath forced his way unto my chamber with evil desires and lust and would have violated me and disgraced thee. But he saw the slaves and went back ashamed."

Her evil words fell like poisoned arrows on the King's heart but he did not believe her. His son Siâvaksha could not have such unholy desires for his step mother. All night long as King Kaikâush lay in the deadly emb-

race of his Queen, his mind was uneasy and his heart was sick.

When the day dawned on the morrow the King wished to try the declared guilt of his son. He proclaimed that Siâvaksha would have to sit on a pile of the sandal wood which would be burnt. If he came forth alive and unhurt he would be innocent of the crime that Queen Sudâbah had accused him of. And before the day had advanced and the sun was high up in the turquoise blue of the cloudless, Persian skies, a gigantic pile of the sandal wood had been amassed in the courtyard of the palace. It was funereal and looked verily like a pyre. The King and his evil Queen together with the Persian courtiers and warriors and the most wondrous Iranian ladies gathered together to watch this strange sight. The warriors and courtiers who adored the young Prince were incredulous of the guilt that had branded his hitherto stainless name. The sunlight fell athwart the pyre of sandalwood and Siâvaksha sat on its very top, a statue carved out of the palest alabaster. His head fell on his bosom, his legs were crossed, his body resting on them. The wood was lit

by the torches. In the hushed silence, the crackling could be distinctly heard. The flames arose—flames upon flames and Siâvaksha's figure was entirely covered by the dense, thick blue vapours. What were before piles of the sandal wood were now heaps of stiff ashes. But Siâvaksha was alive and unhurt. The courtiers and the warriors hailed him as an innocent man and the King arose, ashen white and trembling, and from the pavilion of the silken canopy could be heard:

“To death with the evil Queen Sudâbah!—to death with her!”.....

At night, a stream of liquid light fell from the torches into the pitch darkness of the prison cell. A figure, lying prone on the ground, ceased moaning as she saw the phantom like appearance of a man clothed and robed all in white. The man entered the cell with a torch in hand. The light fell athwart the death like paleness of the Queen Sudâbah who trembled and shook in every limb of her body as she saw her son Siâvaksha.

“Tomorrow I die, torn from limb to limb. But yet thou canst make me a happy woman.

Siâvaksha, thou man of my delight, yet love me, yet love me ! ”

Even in her torments of the approaching tortures of death she thought of her love for Siâvaksha.

“ Woman, I have not come to thee to speak of thy evil love for me ! Thou must make peace with thy God before thy death. Thou shalt not be tortured to death in disgrace. Eat this and die thou here”, and he held out to the Queen a small round ivory box.

And he was gone as secretly as he had come unto her.

Long she lay on the ground as he had left her. Then in the pitch darkness of the cell, she opened the box and felt for the contents with her hand. There was a pill, smaller than the smallest pearl.

While Queen Sudâbah lay dead in the cell of her prison, King Kaikâush was drowning his sorrow by the sounds of the viols and the cymbals. By his side was Siâvaksha, pale and white. He looked at him and then again he turned his gaze upon the dancing girls.

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**MEDITATION DE THAIS-  
MASSENET.**

TO MISS JESSIE BAYES,  
FOR THE GREAT JOY THAT HER LOVELY  
PICTURES GIVE ME.

## MEDITATION-DE-THAÏS-MASSENET.

**U**NDER the darkling shades of a chenar, stood a boy and a girl of Cashmere. They stood side by side and the hand of the girl lay locked into that of the boy. They were silent and each watched the shadows of the sun dance on the waters of the Wular. A little distance from them, was the village, with the mud and wood huts and along them was a chain of the chenar trees. Across the waters in front of them, lay a range of gigantic mountains, turning a deep blue, scintillated by the sun.

“ You will come with me to night ?” asked the boy to the girl, breaking the ecstatic silence, although he asked softly and his voice played about on the ears of the girl like the notes of some beautiful music.

“ Yes ” replied the girl, “ a thousand times yes ”.

And she meant what she said for her beautiful mouth and the lovely lips puckered up

firmly and her black eyes assumed a determined expression. The boy sighed and he was calm and happy. The boy and the girl still held each other's hands and they were silent. Then again the boy turned to the girl.

"You know what you are doing? You know you are leaving the village and your people? You know you may never set your eyes on them again? You know you are defying them by running away with me across the waters and over the hills?"

The girl looked up to the boy. Her eyes were tear-dimmed but her voice was firm.

"What are those to me who understand me not? What are they compared to you? Would it matter if I were not to see them?—When I would see you day and night, when you would be ever near me, when you would lie close, close to my heart? What is all compared to you? I would follow you to the gates of Hell, beloved, with my love."

Then the boy held the girl firmly in his arms and lifted up her face to him. He kissed her on the mouth and softly passed his hands through her long black hair which fell in clusters about her shoulders.



"You are great!" said the boy to the girl, "To-night I will take you across the waters and over the hills and I will wed you!".....

Ere the sun set that evening, the clouds gathered closely to each other till they hid it in their black folds, and the sky which was blue was now an ominous black. Later the black clouds rumbled, the dark, ominous skies cracked and spouted fire, and the heavens wept and it was raining heavily. But in the rumbling and lightning and the rain, under the darkling shades of a chenar, stood the boy, waiting, waiting for the girl to come. A little distance from him was moored a canoe, ready for the flight. Atlength was heard a noise on the dead leaves, and in the cold, sable night, the girl came. She came to her lover and once again locked her hand in his.

"We have difficulties to surmount ere we begin a new life. They will make our loves more precious, our lives more solid." said the boy, "You are ready to come?"

"Yes" replied the girl, "a thousand times yes."

Then they moved like two phantoms towards the canoe and the lightning lit their

pale, agitated faces. Slowly the canoe left the shores and the girl sat beside her lover, strangely agitated and expectant on the beginning of their joys and the new life they were to commence across the waters and over the hills.

In the meanwhile the tempest surged greater and greater.

"Let me row too", said the girl and took in her hand the leaf-shaped oar of Cashmere.

Away a little from the shores, the canoe rose and fell, beating time with the tempest. It surged high up in the heavens, then it fell, turned back, and was rocked by the maddened waves of the Wular. And thus in the tempest-tossed canoe sat the lovers fighting against frenzied nature, fighting to break the fetters and to commence a new life of bliss and eternal love. But the gods willed it otherwise and the canoe tremulously trembled.

"For you, beloved, I will conquer the gods, if need be" said the boy to the girl.

But the girl, as if frightened by the mad talk, spake,

"Hush! offend not the gods!"

The heavens cracked and spouted fire and a terrible gust of wind swayed the canoe to and fro. Like a thing of invisible force the winds of the tempest wrenched the boy from the girl and left her alone in the canoe. Her lover struggled in the maddened waves of the Wular and the canoe moved away from his drowning grasp. The girl, mad with grief, rose in the canoe, tempest tossed, and rent the night with her screams. But the night was a chaos of sounds and nobody heard the heart-broken screams of an agonised girl. Thus she stood, alone in the canoe, separated from him, with whom she would have begun a life of love. And then the canoe surged on the maddened waves of the Wular, tempest tossed and empty, for the girl had followed her lover into the empty.

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**BLUE SKIES AND BROWN  
SANDS.**

TO MY PARENTS,  
**HIRABAI AND KAVESJI JALBHOY SETT.**

## BLUE SKIES AND BROWN SANDS.

**T**HE rays of the burning sun pierced through the thin, white, muslin curtains into the spacious room. It was the middle of the day just when the heat in Seville was insufferable. Narano da Gama, to give the famous matador's full name, lay on a low couch, puffing at a big cigar. He was alone in the room. He was to fight one of the biggest bull fights and he was doing so after a very long time. As he lay there on the sofa he kept on thinking of his life and his career as a matador.

Born of poor parents, Da Gama was apprenticed to the local cobbler, in the village of Sesta. His father was dead and his mother was determined to make a cobbler of her boy. But Da Gama was a passionate youth and the dull environment of Sesta and the torpid life as a'prentice to the cobbler very soon tired his adventurous spirit. Da Gama wished to become a matador but his mother would not

hear of it. Things went on pretty much the same for Narano until at the annual fair of Santa Beata, there came to Sesta a strolling group of matadors. It proved to be too much for Narano as he watched the fight between men and bulls and the old temptation returned again to him, and when the strolling matadors had left Sesta, Narano was missing in the village. He had fled from his mother and from the odious cobbler. The mother's anger was infinite. At this time Narano was fifteen and before he was twenty people began to talk of him in little villages and towns. Narano had not so far taken part in any of the more serious fights at either Madrid or Seville. He was yet so young, and when Narano had accumulated a respectable little fortune, he sneaked back to Sesta to beg forgiveness from his mother, and the mother did forgive her boy and so once again Da Gama was basking in the sunshine, breathing ozone at Sesta. One of his old playmates was Assunta, the daughter of a neighbour. He had left her a mere chit and he returned to find her a beautiful young woman. Assunta and Narano had both grown up together and they were

taught to love each other, and when Narano was holidaying in the sunshine of Sesta, he daily sought the company of Assunta and each day their love increased. The matador's mother encouraged the young people to be together as much as was possible, for she was desirous of making the beautiful young girl her daughter. Before long Assunta was happily betrothed to Narano. Narano's little purse was soon emptying and he found it would be wise to take the rôle of the vagrant matador once again and so he contemplated leaving his mother and the betrothed Assunta for the time being. The lovers, on the vigil of Da-Gama's departure, stood side by side, holding each other's hands, near a grove of oranges. The orange blossoms swayed gently in the evening breeze and the last streaks of sun-shine played about the grove and turned it into a flame of pink. An orange blossom fell at the feet of the young couple and Narano took the beautiful, fragile thing in his hands and held it towards Assunta.

"What does it remind you of, dearest?"

"The wedding."

Then he pressed the beautiful, blushing girl to the granite of his strong chest and she lay there still. He lifted her mouth to his and sealed on her lips the bondage of love.

"Your mouth is like a pomegranate," he said  
.....

Two years elapsed and Narano was still a vagrant toreador. However one day fortune smiled on him at Madrid. He was at length to fight a serious bull fight. The arena was crowded with the gay, happy-go-lucky Spanish, seeking excitement. The matador was known to be as yet young and that perhaps was one of the reasons why the arena was so filled. Narano was strikingly handsome as he stepped forth in the middle of the arena, standing erect like a statue, on the brown sands under the canopy of the blue skies. The sun's rays played about his green-gold tunic.

Amidst the thousands, there was a certain young lady who watched the young matador with interest. She sat in a box very near to the Royal box. Her beautiful and expensive dressing made her out to be a woman of unusual tastes. Her skin was very white and her features were beautiful. Her face made one



think of a delicately sculptured marble bust. Her masses of thick black hair were hidden in a white, exquisite mantilla. In her hand was a tortoise shell-ivory fan which she used vigorously. Next to her sat a young man, dressed in an English lounge suit. He was tall and well built and his dark brown face was clean shaven. The lady turned to him.

“What a fine figure the matador has ! and how handsome he is !”

“Yes, Da-Gama is striking. This is the first time, Senorita, that he fights at Madrid. I know him.”

“You know him ! Then Alvdor, could you not bring him to my house one evening ?”

“With pleasure, Senorita Da Culta.”

The fight commenced. By strategie steps, Narano stationed the bull in awkward corners and before long, attacked it with celerity and the victory was his. The crowd was delighted with the young man's skill but no one was more delighted than Madrid's most beautiful girl, Céla da Culta. She was a women of no morals. But she was known amongst the best circles through the influence of a minister whose cast off mistress she was believed to be

and she was very rich, which mattered a great deal. Alvarador sought the matador the same day and told him of the beautiful Da Culta's invitation. Narano's joy was infinite for he was a vain youth and to be sought by Madrid's beauty was a great achievement for him. And so the portals of Da Culta's mansion were opened to the matador from that day.

Da Culta seemed more ethereal than earthly that evening. She was all in white and her bare arms were covered by a jet, black, silken shawl. As she stood in front of Narano she looked like a wondrously beautiful being.

"You delighted me, Senor, with your fight to-day."

Narano bowed, Alvarador said :

"Senor Da Gama's reputation as a great matador is made from to-day !"

Céla Da Culta moved away to a low divan, draped with Indian red silks and motioned Narano to follow suit and sit by her side. Narano was more than gratified by this attention.

The room was most tastefully furnished with costly and artistic pieces. Large shaded elect-

ric lamps threw their pale shadows on the pair sitting on the couch and on to Alvador who was isolated on a Louis Quinze chair. A heavy scent of an Eastern incense floated through the air. The effect that this room produced was an effect of luxury and taste, and the person who possessed these riches and enjoyed them was a young lady who defied social conventionalities as she defied everything else, a young lady with *laissez aller* principles—Céla Da Culta.

Champagne was brought by silent footmen to the company. They drank to the success of Narano. Da Culta wished to refill the matador's empty glass and Narano held it forth to her.

"Champagne is the nectar of life for it gives one new thoughts and sensations."

"And new passions, *Senorita* !" interrupted Da Gama. Da Culta smiled.

"Exactly so ! New passions ! and life must be a long string of pearls, and each pearl must speak of some love, some sensation, some emotion, and some passion. At least life is so to me !" "While to some, *Senorita*, life is a

necklace of poverty and crime," remarked Alvdor, sipping at his champagne.

Da Culta held out a large wooden box on which were carved the Hindu gods. The box had the scent of the sandalwood.

"Have one of these cigarettes. They came from Port Said."

"From an admirer?"

"Yes, Senor Da Gama."

"And the box?"

"I bought it."

Narano found that the lady of this beautiful mansion was well versed in matters of art and literature and sport and that she could discuss a subject from a bull fight to a picture of Titian. Scandal had singled Da Culta with her fiery tongue and she might be that which the world judged her to be but she was a woman of culture and taste and that mattered much; also her riches were taken into consideration by many.

Alvdor rose and excused himself for an other engagement.

"Senorita, you are so interested in my friend that you will not miss me."

" You speak charmingly. Au revoir !"

After Alvarado had retired from the salon, a silence, which is awkward at times, fell, and the ticking of a large French clock could be heard. Narano looked up at the strange lovely being who sat next to him. She was looking like one ethereal in her white frock and her skin was so lovely in the shaded lights.

" Why do you not speak ?"

" I am thinking. "

" Of what ?"

" Of you and your beauty."

Céla Da Culta waved her hand as much as to declare that she had received such compliments before. She rose from the divan and hugged at her black shawl which clung closely round her shoulders.

" I will play you something. "

As she sat on the piano, the light from the alabaster lamp fell on her face which was dazzling white. Her fingers moved carelessly on the keys and after playing some chords, she struck up a Chopin. It was the Fantaisie Impromptu. She played it divinely and as the sounds floated in the still, night air of the salon, they hovered in Narano's heart for they

spoke strangely of a lovely emotion and love. He rose ere Da Culta had finished the composition and advanced towards her. He stood near her, resting his elbows on the piano. His head fell in his hands and he shut his eyes.

“ Go and sit there,” said Céla, “ Sit there, away from me.”

“ Oh, no, not that ”

She did not finish the *Fantaisie Impromptu* but nearing the end, she trilled off and rose from the piano.

“ Play—please play ”

“ I cannot. ”

Céla Da Culta moved off to the divan and Narano again sat by her side. They did not speak now. Both were silent. And after sitting thus, side by side, locked up in silence, late into the night, Narano rose to leave this lovely woman. But Céla rested both her hands on the matador's shoulders and said in a voice that was both strange and melodious :

“ You shall not go ! ”

And looking closely into Narano's dark, brown eyes she let her shawl fall from her shoulders, and one lovely bare arm and the

bosom were revealed to the gaze of the matador.

“ Will you go now ? ”

“ Oh, no, no, ! ”

And Narano was seized with a maddening hunger of love and he caught hold of Céla Da Culta tightly to him—just as he had crushed Assunta to his breast and he passed his hands through the lovely tresses of her black hair and on to her white shoulders and covered her face with kisses.

And with the love that this beautiful woman gave him, Narano forgot the little girl of his village and was unfaithful to her. But though Narano was mad with love for Céla and they were happy, yet happiness took to the wings, for Narano was coarse and Céla Da Culta could not cope with coarseness. So one day Da Gama was rudely shaken from his love dreams by finding the gates closed to him and Da Culta had left Seville. This terrible surprise shook him much and moroseness followed. He did not go to Sesta to find consolation in his betrothed as he had some self respect left him and he knew he had sinned against her and betrayed her trust and neglect-

ed her. So he took consolation in women and fought bull fights. He was to fight one on that very day.....

Many jingling bells fell on his ears and he was aroused from his memories. The bells that clashed and jingled so much were the bells of a carriage. Very soon footsteps were heard, the door was thrown open, and his mother came into the room. He rose from the divan, threw his cigar away, which was mostly finished and was buried deep in the loving bosom of his mother.

“ My boy !—Ah, my boy !” and the mother burst into tears.

Then came explanations. Why had not Narano visited them at Sesta ? He was busy. Was it true that that perfectly frightful woman—the society courtesan, Da Culta, was Narano’s mistress ? Narano did not reply.

“ So it is true then ? You wretched boy !. You have been false to Assunta !” “ Mother, do not make it hard for me ! everything is at an end between me and Senorita da Culta. ”

“ Does not every one know that Da Culta is a harlot ? Have you heard that when she threw you away like an old slipper she has



taken a woman-like French poet, a Laurier by name?"

Narano merely mutely bowed his head which meant to say that the Laurier scandal was true. Narano was coarse but Laurier had the *esprit-de-bienganté* and he was so delicate that Céla took him to her heart and then he wrote verses.

The valet put an end to the conversation between mother and son. It was time to dress Narano for the fight. The mother retired from the room, and after Narano was dressed in a red and gold tunic, his hair curled, his face and hands scented and he was ready to go, she returned to kiss her famous son.

"I have seen a raven to-day, mother!"

"Nonsense! Nonsense! Boy! Raven or no raven you shall win—as you always do! Aurevoir! I shall wait here for you, and then I wish to have a talk with you!"

So the talk would be a long one and would deal with Da Culta and Assunta's future, the matador knew.

The open victoria bearing Da Gama and his valet put them at the principal entrance of

the Arena. There was the faithful Alvarado waiting. Narano stood in the vehicle and surveyed the scene in front of him. The road leading to the Arena-entrance was a motley of strange men and women. There were the tourists come to see a bull-fight—English and Americans, mostly in silk lounge suits and cambric frocks. The men were goggled and the ladies veiled to keep the glare off their eyes. But the most predominant were Spain's own cavaliers in tunics of red and gold and green, yellow and blue, tunics of all colours which dazzled the eyes of people for the sun beat on these glaring colours. They wore large straw hats which kept the fierce sun from off their brown faces and the many coloured bands which were bound around their waists gave them a distingué air. Most of the cavaliers were accompanied by fair and dark women—women with brown eyes and women with lovely coal black eyes, women in silken shawls and beautiful mantillas. Near the entrance of the Arena, squatting on the ground, amidst the sands and filth, were beggars and orange sellers and water sellers in jugs of Eastern designs and gypsy women,

telling fortunes by the lines on the hands and by playing cards. And there were loafers—plenty of loafers and hawkers that bawled out their wares—balloons and penny whistles.

The people no longer cheered Narano as of old. Murmurs passed through them and some winked knowingly and the name of Da Culta was coupled with the toreador's. Narano threw his cape round his shoulders and joined Alvador to move to the stand, reserved for matadors. Alvador turned to the valet, who was following his master.

“Is your master in good spirits?”:

“In the best, Senor. He will fight as he has never done so before.” Then Alvador whispered to Narano that he had seen Assunta in the Arena. She was alone. Narano turned pale. His mother had not mentioned Assunta's coming to Seville. Perhaps it was supposed to be a surprise.

Many people had come out of cussed curiosity—merely to see the lover of Seville's most beautiful lady. They grew impatient at the delay of the fight and blew furiously at their whistles and used their hands equally with vigour.

But when Narano made his appearance and walked forwards, towards the centre of the Arena, a dead silence fell throughout the assembly. The sun shone full on his big muscular figure, clad in the red-gold tunic. Narano looked unusually handsome. The dancing rays of the sun that played about his brown face gave it a character and vigour. The appearance of their once dear hero proved too irresistible to the passionate Spanish and one and all they burst out into a tremendous cheer and clapped their hands. But Da Gama was not excited or elated by their recognition, for as he stood down below, in the sands, his eyes were fixed upon two boxes. One of them contained the beautiful Da Culta who was accompanied by a flaxen haired man, very pale and delicate looking, dressed in a tight fitting suit with an unmistakable air that it was made at Paris. It was Laurier. The other box, some distance away, but on the same tier, contained Assunta, who sat there lovely and deathly pale. Her eyes sought out Narano and both these people looked for one ghastly minute at each other. The girl looked appealingly at her betrothed

and the look she cast at him was frightful in all its mute agony of heart and soul. The man—the man just betrayed his sin and dropped his eyes on to the sands.

And when the agitated crowd had once again subsided into a calm, a shrill laughter rang out through the air and seemed to hover above Narano. It was the laughter of the society courtesan, Céla Da Culta.

An immense and ferocious bull rushed towards the matador who avoided its attack with subtilty. After a great deal of diplomacy on both sides, Da Gama succeeded in driving the bull into a corner and leapt lightly towards the beast, digging the steel, which he held in his hands, into the breast of the bull. The beast gave a terrific yell and blood gushed out from the wounded throat. It yet had life and with redoubled energy attacked its enemy. Once again Da Culta laughed and the horrible laughter unnerved Narano. He knew he had well nigh ruined Assunta's life by betraying her trust in him and sinning against her. He did not attempt to attack the enraged bull and the love for the smell of blood did not come to him as it did in former fights. He grew

pale and sick and felt as if sense were gradually leaving him. The crowd thought he was growing afraid of the wounded animal and yelled indignantly.

"Coward! Coward! Go for the bull! Go for him, coward!"

But Narano felt like one bereft of sense and bodily strength. He swayed on the sands and then fell with a crash in them. A torrent of brown sands rose up in the air towards the cloudless, blue skies. The prostrate matador did not attempt to rise and the furious bull rushed upon its prey and dug its horns deeply in the human ribs and the bones crunched and broke and a stream of blood flowed, spreading like a frightful red carpet on the brown sands.

But the blood also flowed with rapidity from the wounded beast who was grovelling on the ground in its death-pain and then lay prone on the sands in the weakness of one wounded and dying.

An uncanny silence reigned in the Arena and the people watched the man and the beast dying. But the man with his noble, immortal nature, the man with his reasoning

and love, moved towards the beast who lay dying by his hand and crawling feebly towards the bull, put his hands on the prostrate figure of the beast, as if embracing it for the last time. And the bull as if understanding the emotion of the man, lay its head harmlessly on the man's shoulder and they both were friends—the man and the beast before they died on a heap of brown sands beneath a large canopy of the cloudless, blue skies.

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**THE SAD FATE OF A CHARMING  
ENGLISHMAN WHO SEDUCED  
A WOMAN OF CASHMERE.**

**TO SIR M. M. BHOWNAGREE.**



## THE SAD FATE OF A CHARMING ENGLISHMAN WHO SEDUCED A WOMAN OF CASHMERE.

**T**he tale I am about to tell you deals with an interesting and immoral triangle. The triangle consists of a charming English gentleman, a Cashmere boatman, and his faithless and flippant wife. It was the ancient Eve who was the cause of trouble between God and Adam and it is the modern Eve who is responsible for many conspiracies and troubles. But what conspiracy, what intrigue, what quarrel is without the encouragement and the temptation of a woman? And a conspiracy or an intrigue, a temptation or a quarrel without a woman would not be savoury. I am not surprised at the infatuation of this charming English gentleman for a woman of Cashmere as the features of these women are very attractive and their forms are perfect. From Marco Polo and François Bernier to the Hon. Mrs. Bruce and Miss

Marion Doughty all praise the beauty of the Cashmere women. And if women will praise other women's beauty—which is a very rare thing to do as they are said to be jealous of the beauty of their own sex and therefore are “catty” of lovely women—thus the weakness and passion of the charming English gentleman for a woman of Cashmere must be excused by us. I am loath to give the Englishman's name as perhaps his family—if he has one—would be wroth at my liberty.

I was touring the Cashmere lakes in a very nice houseboat and my fleet—for a houseboat must necessarily go with a cook boat and a “shikara” or what we call a “punt” at Richmond—my fleet, was moored up against a very gigantic and craggy mountain, near the sleepy village of Alsu, on the Wular lake. It was late in the evening and having finished dinner, I went upon the roof of the boat which is a terrace, a deck, and a garden all turned into one. It is a terrace because you can sit there at all time of the day or any time ; it is a deck because one or two persons can pace it ; and it is a garden because a dozen decrepit flower pots containing shab-

by flowers are placed along the railings. I went up to the terrace after dinner, on this night, as I was wont to do. The moon was high up in the cloudless, dark blue skies and had flooded the roof with her pale, silvery light. The entire aspect around me—the craggy mountain, the dark, tall trees, the mountain chains, and the rumbling waters of the treacherous Wular, all looked beautiful by moonlight. I wished to see the snowy peaks of the Nagna Prabat but as luck would have it, the clouds had settled on it. I was disappointed for I particularly wanted to see Nagna, scintillated in the moonlight. Habiba, the Maji, followed me, as he sometimes did. He was an amusing and an obliging fellow and told me all sorts of stories with the local colour. He came to where I was stretched on a deck chair and salammmed me. I told him I was disappointed at not seeing Nagna Prabat.

“The Hazoor will see it tomorrow night.” When you could not get a thing the same day, Habiba would say that on the morrow perhaps we would obtain it. It was *always* “the morrow” with him.

As I lay languorously stretched on the deck chair and gazed at the beautiful effect of the moon on the rocks and the lake, I yearned to hear a story. I was in the mood for it. Moreover I wished to hear the story of the sad fate that befell the Englishman, many years ago. I had heard something about the unfortunate man but what I heard was unsatisfactory. So I turned to the Maji who was now squatting on the ground, at my feet, and I told him that he would please me much by telling me in detail of the sad fate of the charming Englishman who seduced a woman of Cashmere. He grinned good humouredly and said:

“This happened many years ago and I heard about the incidents and the events of the story from my father. Very few English gentlemen came to Cashmere in those old days as the journey was considered to be very fatiguing, and bad and those Englishmen who did come were chiefly all bachelors or widowers. This English gentleman about whom you wish to hear was a bachelor and he was said to be exceedingly rich. He had the best house boat and plenty of servants. He went about

Srinagar in great state and spent his money in a princely fashion. The wretched, wily merchants and the shop people were always fawning and cringing at him and he bought many things from Cashmere—shawls, jewels, and wood carving. He was of a very charming disposition—good natured, affable, and charitable, and a man of no small taste. But this charming English gentleman had one weakness and that weakness was for women. He was mad after women, hazoor, and would spend considerable money and have beautiful women around him, He was a sort of a nawab and had his zenana on board his house-boat. He actually had several Bibi Shahibas on his boat. And those whom he had were exceedingly beautiful. But they were court-esans and he spent his money lavishly on them. He was touring about the country with his cavalcade of boats and his troupe of Bibis. I said, hazoor, that he was a man of taste and his love for natural beauty was great. He was very fond of our delicate Cashmere scenery and many a time would watch the sunrise over the mountains. One day, as he was thus watching the first streaks of a pale,

pink morn, he saw at a little distance from him, a woman of great beauty, bathing in the waters of a lake. As the pink light fell on her white and well formed body, she looked exceedingly attractive. In fact as her black, long, hair, fell about her shoulders and the drops of the waters played about her body, she looked like a wondrous naiad. The charming Englishman was at once smitten by her beauty and vowed to possess her, come what may. He found out that she was the wife of one of the boatmen and was determined to tempt her with his riches. She was more beautiful and graceful than all the Bibi Shahibas put together. He was a man of good nature, I have said, but he wished to be doubly good-natured to his Maji, who was, hazoor, a man of bad principles. He took this man in his confidence, perhaps with many presents and told him that he wished to possess this woman. The Maji was not surprised at this wish for he knew the English gentleman's weakness and wanted to make a large profit out of this pleasant transaction. So he set about charmingly and pleased the boat woman as much as he could. He gave her

presents and said they were from the Lord Shahib and this attention from the Lord Shahib to a boat woman touched the vanity and delighted the woman greatly. Besides being beautiful and vain the woman was faithless to her husband and had scanty notions of morality. One day, the villainous Maji, who was called Mahomed, came mightily pleased to the charming English gentleman and said that his wish could be fulfilled that very night. The woman had consented to come to the Lord Shahib's boat.

“ ‘ Hazoor’ said Mahomed, ‘ hazoor, who would refuse your wish? The woman is greatly pleased that your lordship should notice her beauty and consents to come to the boat tonight. ’ ”

“ ‘ Fellow, how much will she have ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Hazoor, a pair of silver bangles will please her greatly. ’ ”

“ ‘ Silver bangles !—why give her three pairs of bangles and armlets and a pair of earrings and rings for her nose and rings for the toes of her feet. ’ ”

Thus the bargain was struck to the delight of all. The Englishman would have the

woman ; the woman would have all these ornaments and Mahomed would make a nice booty out of the business.

The woman was married, and her husband was working on the Englishman's boat. The Englishman therefore asked Mahomed what he proposed doing with her husband.

“ ‘ Hazoor, I shall send him this evening to the village to make some purchases and will tell him to rest there for the night ! ’ ”

But Mahomed, the wily wretch, did nothing of the sort. He told the boatman the particulars of the Englishman's offer and also how the woman had willingly consented to visit him in his cabin that night. The boatman was not surprised as he had his suspicions regarding his wife and also she had displeased him lately and he let her have her way so that he could discard her with proper reasons. Besides this Mahomed with his usual capacity for business was for proposing another transaction.

“ I will smuggle you into the lord's bedroom,” said he to the boatman, “ you must watch everything and after you have discovered your wife's faithlessness with the



Englishman, threaten him to bring the matter to light and dishonour him. I will also threaten him and we two will squeeze as much as we can from him."

This was a god-send to the boatman for he could discard his wretched wife and get money without doing any work. He pretended not to know anything about his wife's faithlessness and made as if to set out for the village but in reality Mahomed smuggled him into the Lord's bedroom and the fellow was quietly lying beneath the English gentleman's charpai.

That night all persons were excited. The Englishman had his wish fulfilled and the woman of Cashmere came to his cabin. Her husband, who was concealed beneath the charpai, saw his wife's faithlessness with his own eyes. After a time the woman left the cabin but her husband was still concealed, to Mahomed's discomfiture for the wretch thought that now he and the boatman could levy a booty from the Lord Shahib. But he kept quiet so that he would not be implicated, in case the matter turned out to be a violent

one. The boatman lay quiet in his position and cunningly waited till the English gentleman should go to sleep. And later the English gentleman did sleep. " "And what did the villain do?" I asked Habiba.

Habiba's face here took a very diabolical expression. He said, "Hazoor, the boatman passed a knife through the Englishman's throat and pinned it to his pillow."

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**MOONLIGHT SONATA—  
BEETHOVEN.**

To HERBERT SIMS REEVES, Esq.

## MOONLIGHT SONATA—BEETHOVEN.

“ He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her—John VIII, 7.”

“ But I say unto you that every man that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart—Matt. V, 28.”

**T**HE moon glistened like a diamond in the cloudless, pale blue, Eastern skies, which spread out overhead like a lovely shawl. It shone full and bright on a city, somewhere in the East, and her domes and immense cupolas and turrets were dazzling white, silhouetted by the very pale blue of the skies. By day the colouring of the city could best be seen but by night it just looked beautiful.

In the heart of this city there were narrow streets which crossed and recrossed each other. The houses built in these streets were small and all of the same architecture. They

were all one storeyed and were built of a white wood and plaster. On the portals of some of these houses were inscribed Eastern characters in vermilion and blue. The Streets had a mean appearance. They were known as the Streets of Felicity and after dusk heavy scents of incense and jost sticks pervaded throughout them. The air was heavy here and the streets were at night turned into a perfect Babel when the natives in their loose, silken robes and huge turbans and the Westerners in lounge suits moved about languishly, looking at these one storeyed houses and jostled each other in the narrow streets and listened to the laughter and the singing that wafted towards them from the houses. Late at night immense motor cars slowly made their way into the Streets of Felicity and very often the pedestrians could not satisfy their curiosities as to the occupiers of the cars for the hoods were up and the curtains fastened down. But these rich men—for women never entered the Streets of Felicity, no respectable woman did—these rich men would order their cars to stop at certain houses and hastily make their way into them.

The same cars very often came in front of the same low built houses every night. These small houses in these narrow streets were the brothels and the laughter and songs which the pedestrians heard were the laughter of the harlots, and the songs they sang to the accompaniment of stringed instruments were the songs of allurements. After dusk, when the thousand electric bulbs would powerfully palpitate in the night air, the prostitutes would come out on the narrow balconies, dressed in transparent veils or dresses and low-necked, sleeveless blouses.

The life of these women were like the lives of live machines. The routine of their lives was the same every single day. After dusk they began the powdering of the faces and the painting of their lips. Then came the dressing in suggestive dresses and the wearing of gaudy, glittering baubles. When fully attired, the prostitutes would come out on the varandah and lure in all those who seek for forbidden pleasures which are costly. And late, very late into the night would these courtesans sit to the men who paid for their sen-

suous joys and sing to them on the guzla or the duclima or feel the touch of the men on their beautiful, soft bodies. These courtesans would allure the men from the roads with words which promised licentious pleasures and sometimes they would laugh at the men who turned their backs on them. And their laughter was horrible and jarring and cracked in the pure night air. Many of the women were young, yet in girlhood but deprived of their virginity and there were those in the middle ages devoid of customers for they were too jaded and ugly in the extra powder and paint and gems. These brothels were allowed to prosper by the State and so the prostitutes grew rich and fat. Besides the State authorising the existence of the brothels, the parents of many young men encouraged them to visit these establishments, considering it an advantage for a young man to have sexual relations with a woman, with the idea that it was beneficial to the boy.

In a low, one storeyed house, controlled by a woman of European extraction there was a prostitute, known to this Eastern city as La Chrystabile. Nobody knew who she really

was not cared to know. Some said she was French, others that she was a Circassian, while yet others made out that she was Spanish. But that she was an orphan brought up by the woman of the establishment, that she possessed surpassing beauty and that she was yet a young girl every man in the city knew. La Chrystabile was the envy of all the prostitutes for she received prices for the selling of her body worth the ransoms of Eastern potentates.

La Chrystabile was the most beautiful chief priestess of that cult which is practised all the world over—the cult of the selling of beautiful bodies to sensuous men and known as prostitution—the most degrading, self abasing, and frightful mode of life a woman undergoes and which a man makes her do so. La Chrystabile possessed the most beautiful and delicately chiselled features. The curves of her lips and mouth were perfect while her eyes and hair were raven black and her skin and her throat were whiter than the whitest ivory. The curves of her arms and her body made men insane, and they paid fabulous sums to feel the softness of her



white skin. The sensuous enjoyed her physical beauty while artists gloried in her loveliness from the aesthetical point of view and she was often reproduced on the canvas.

The brothel which she inhabited was always crowded by the rich and equally by the poor. While the rich Nawabs bid for her, the poor gazed on her loveliness, spellbound. She was more beautiful than the day, more godly than a goddess in all her loveliness—and yet she was stripped of her virginity very early in life for the pleasures of men who paid heavily for them and so La Chrystabile was like all prostitutes, greedy of money and of lovely things. She yearned to feel the touch of beautiful, soft, coloured silks next to her white body and she loved to possess all that was beautiful. While the other courtesans looked for gaudiness La Chrystabile looked for beauty. And sometimes she shuddered when she thought of her love which was sold daily and wondered whether an ideal love existed at all, even away from the Streets of Felicity.

Every night very late after sunset when the brothel was filling with men, sober and dead drunk and insane with lust and licentiousness,

La Chrystabile would come forth on a raised dais and the encircling men, gaping at her with sensuous pleasure, would bid for her. And so daily she allowed herself to be auctioned and the highest bidder took her body and dragged her slowly into an adjoining room with an yielding, low divan where shaded lights gave soft, phantom like shadows. It was in this room of the soft, shaded lights and ghost-like shadows that La Chrystabile dressed in transparent veils and silks, would follow the highest bidder to give him a taste of the dreamlike forbidden fruits which her body afforded. And many a time lying side by side on the soft, cushioned divan would a Nawab or a Rajah or a rich young man ask her:

“ La Chrystabile, leave this frightful place and I will make you my mistress. You shall have all that your heart craves for !”

And the courtesan would make reply :

“ I will leave prostitution only when my ideal will come forth to love me. Then and only then will I love only him.”

When Chrystabile was daily auctioned the room was a veritable cosmopolitan kingdom. There were Frenchmen and Italians, Turks

and Englishmen, Persians, Arabs, Negroes, Chinese and Spanish—men of all professions and ages—but there were mostly soldiers and sailors and merchants who visited the Eastern city and entered the incense pervading atmosphere, the laughter and song kingdom of the Streets of Felicity, where bodies were bought and women deprived of their purity.

One night when the Nawabs and the soldiers, Rajahs and merchants were encircled round Chrystabile and bid prices for the joys of her body, there stood amongst these medley of men, insane for physical and licentious pleasures, a live bronze god, naked save for a strip of white cloth which clung round his loins. He was a coolie and he stood there wild with delight at the mere prospect of gazing upon the courtesan's beauty.

He did not come to bid for her body and the way in which men bought this woman—so godly and lovely, seemed to him incomprehensible. The coolie's figure was beautiful in all its perfection. He was tall, thin and well built. The muscles of his arms were the envy of many gymnasts and his rounded thighs and slim legs were perfect. His clean

shaven black face was striking with the pointed nose and the coal black eyes, which were fixed on the harlot. Though he was a coolie, he put many a Nawab and Rajah to shame for he was more handsome than they. La Chrystabile, decked out in diamonds, which clung to her white throat and bosom and bare arms and dressed in a pale, pink veil which was vocal of sensuousness, was suddenly awakened from a reverie, when she saw that a strange, strong, silent, black man was watching her.

Her heart beat wildly and she looked askance at the man. Her body shook with emotion as she watched this beautiful man. He was a low caste man, yet what beauty he had! Her sense of the beautiful was awakened within her and the other men around her were nonentities. The black man interested her and if he could not possess her then she must possess him. Of a sudden she spoke:

“To night I am not for sale.”

This strange exclamation came like a thunderbolt to the men who were ready to give prices that could buy the most precious pearls and the wonders of the world. Some

thought she had gone mad, others that she was ill. And so that night she went of her own accord without a lover who paid her. The men left the brothel, puzzled, but the coolie was detained by La Chrystabile. In the silence of the Eastern night, La Chrystabile came to the coolie and stood facing him. This man coming from such a low caste knew not what beauty meant and the loveliness of the prostitute maddened him. He looked at her dumbly, his mouth open and his eyes wide awake. She came closer and closer to him, slowly and softly as an ethereal being, bringing with her beauty, love and glory.

Without a word she looked closely into the eyes of the coolie and then clasped his neck with her two beautiful hands and gave kisses to him—kisses such as she had never given to man alive—kisses which meant life itself to her for she had found that which she craved and yearned for, her ideal. The coolie understood her not and said :

“ You are making fun of me.”

But the courtesan drew her lover closely, closely to her and passed her hands through his thick black hair which fell in ruins on to his

forehead. From that night onwards the coolie was no longer a coolie. He was clothed and fed and he lived on La Chrystabile's bounty. And onwards her life was a paradise of love for she lived on love and that was the nectar of the gods to her and meant life itself. She was no longer a prostitute and the Nawabs and Rajahs and merchants thought that La Chrystabile was in her dotage to love a coolie and to forsake the rich.

La Chrystabile sold her jewels and dresses and all her riches to clothe and feed her lover. But he wanted more and more and so with each of his wish went each of her gems. She shuddered to think of the future when she found that her riches had all gone and that now she had either to fall back upon him who meant life itself or on to her old forsaken cult.

And one night, lying side by side, her lover awoke and said:

"I want more money!"

La Chrystabile spoke:

"I have none to give you!"

"Then become a prostitute again."

This horrible reply pierced her very heart for La Chrystabile knew she had chosen that which was false and treacherous.

"No longer can I become a prostitute now that I have loved my ideal."

"But I want money!" spoke the man.

"I have none!"

And then the lover arose from the divan and spake threateningly to the woman who gave him shelter and food and clothing.

"Give me money."

La Chrystabile shook her head and sobbed. It was the first time she refused her lover his wish but she had nothing to give him.

Her lover grasped a knife and repeated:

"Give me money."

But La Chrystabile took his neck in both her beautiful hands and kissed his hot perspiring temples. Her lover flung her on the ground and dug the knife deeply in her white, lovely throat. When he had drawn it out it was covered with a red, horrible, trickling gore. A hole was made in her throat and she uttered one pitiable scream. The coolie left the house and went forth into the cold night air. But La Chrystabile called forth to

him and he came not. She staggered on to the varandah and strained her eyes to the road but she found him not. The road was a medley of insane men in search of forbidden pleasures and from a house in front of the dying courtesan, came the sounds of laughter and of songs. The laughter was the laughter of the harlots and the songs were the songs of allurements. The moon bathed the Streets of Felicity with her white, liquid light and the streets and the city around La Chrystabile looked beautiful. The blood gushed forth and her head sank lower and lower on to her bosom till in a spasm of pain La Chrystabile died.

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# **SKRIMUTI.**

**To CECIL LATTA, Esq.**

## SKRIMUTI.

**T**HE sky was in a rich flame as the sun slowly sank behind the twin cupolas of the immense Purbal. This mighty mountain gently slopes down into the vally below, from the twin peaks, which are a landmark, far and wide. The sinking sun, in the shape of a small red ball, shimmered on the two, towering cupolas of the Purbal and in the evening light the blue mass of the mountain turned a deep purple. The rich dark grey and deep orange clouds gave a lovely tone to the setting sun and the Purbal, while the valleys looked beautifully blue. An air of peace and calm descended into the valley. Strings of birds were shrieking in the skies as they took flight to their nests; shepherds and goatherds were following their cattle as they went to their houses; large camp fires were burning around and about the mud and palm leaf huts.

The frail door of one of these valley huts opened and a young girl came out on the threshold. She stood at the door and seemed to breathe in the peaceful air of this calm evening. She gazed at the Purbal over which the deep red light was still lingering and then she looked yonder, at the hills far away, over which the evening light cast a spell of bewildering beauty and scintillated them with lovely lights and shades. And over the hills men were calling out to each other whose echoes vibrated in the valley and the girl at the hut listened to them; men over the hills were driving their bullocks and their oxen and the many chiming bells of the animals floated down with the air to the valley below; men over the hills were talking loudly to each other and their voices in the calm of the evening air were like the peals of so many bells. The girl at the hut was ravished by the twilight around her and she stood at the door, struck dumb with the beauty of the peaceful valley. Not far from her she could hear men singing around the big camp fires which were lit not long ago. The girl of the valley and her neighbours were what civiliza-

tion would brand as "savages". They are the Rahatores of India, to give them their name, and their chief occupation in the valley is to till the lands, to fell woods, and to possess little farms of their own. Civilization with all her rigid, conventional and superfluous precepts call the Rahatores "savages" because they are scantily dressed. It is said that half a century back these people moved about amongst themselves entirely naked. It was their way of living until they were taught to dress—scantily for decency's sake. Although they were naked yet they lived on perfect terms of morality. The missionaries do not seem as yet to have penetrated the valley around the Purbal with their religious tracts, hymn-books, Bibles, and cloths of vermilion wool. They may have penetrated this part of India and if they have, they have not met with success for the Rahatores do not sing hymns and read the Bible, nor do they wear the scarlet woolen cloths. They still live in what remains of their primitive civilization. Wherever the missionaries go, by clothing those whom they call "savages",

they turn the men into thieves and cut-throats and the women into prostitutes.....

The girl at the hut moved away from the door and walked on very slowly, still watching the faint streak of red that remained of the sun on the summit of the Purbal. As she walked onwards, the dead leaves crackled under the pressure of her feet. All around her the place was deserted ; the farmers and their workers had gone to their houses. She walked on slowly from her mud and palm-leaf hut towards a quiet wood and sat down under a banyan tree. The thick black hair of the girl were parted in the middle and on her forehead was entwined a string of beads. From her ears there fell large round silver ear-rings. Her soft, brown, bosom was covered with countless strings of glass beads and necklaces made out of the tiger claws. The perfect shapes of her breasts were hidden in a sleeveless jacket of red and black cotton and her finely shaped thighs and legs were covered in a calico cloth of the same colours. Her face was clear cut and the appearance of the valley-girl was beautiful.

She was thinking of Chowk, the farm-hand of a neighbour. Chowk came to their part of the valley two years back. Her first sight of him had been when they were making hay. He was a well built, muscular young man of a striking appearance. On that afternoon, Skrimuti was far from well but she was working in the fields. Her head was aching and she was feeling very faint with the heat. She noticed the young man working vigorously, his swarthy, naked body shining in the sun. He was a stranger. Skrimuti and the young man had looked at each other more than once, while making hay. The man noticed that the young woman worked very lethargically and languorously. Then he came forward to where Skrimuti was sitting with the other women, his crescent shaped steel dagger in hand. The Rahatores use this dagger in many ways—cutting hay, killing the hare or the deer and sometimes killing human beings. "Let me tie your stacks up for you." the young man had said, looking at Skrimuti boldly in the eyes.

The young girl handed him her stacks and he tied them up in neat bundles.

"I have been watching you. You work as if under compulsion. I suppose you are unwell."

Then Skrimuti looked into his eyes, smiled, and said:

"Yes, I am not well to-day."

When he was gone she asked the women who the young man was who had befriended her in the simple but charming way, and she was told that he was Chowk, the farm-hand who was living with the patel of the village. From that time Chowk remained in the valley of the Purbal.

After his friendliness towards Skrimuti in the hay field, he saw her again in the jungle, felling wood. He watched her from a distance, cutting wood with measured cadences. He was fascinated by her lovely figure at work, now erect as a statue, carved out of bronze, now stooping low. But at intervals she desisted from work and stood erect as if her back ached. Chowk, no longer resisting from going up and helping her, went forward. She gave a start as she recognised him. She let him cut the wood for her as if she expected this help from him and resting on the ground, she

watched him at the task. And as the axe fell on the wood with regular time, Skrimuti and Chowk conversed. As time went on she found that she knew the young man better and admired him. And so she found herself working always by his side. As she sat in the still evening air on this day and thought of her friendship with Chowk, she could hear a step falling on the dead leaves, crunching them with the pressure. She turned round in the direction and listened. It was a soft movement but the rustling of the dead leaves was distinct. The step was as soft as that of a panther. The evening had far advanced. Countless little stars were twinkling in the dark blue skies and the moon was gradually rising. From the dark of the jungle, she saw something white, protrude. The white thing was the loincloth of a man. And the man was advancing towards the banyan tree. She watched him come towards her. The man could not see her for she was sitting in the shadows. The man came nearer. And as he drew quite close to her, Skrimuti, by the light of the stars and the pale moon, caught sight of the well built, muscular frame of



Chowk. She gave a little cry of surprise as she saw his well known features. He was naked save for the pure white cloth which hung round his perfect thighs. His head was also bare. Around his stomach was entwined a thick string, and on the side of his right ribs, there hung, pendulously, the crescent shaped dagger, which glistened in the twilight. The little cry which Skrimuti gave stopped Chowk from going further. He advanced towards where he had heard the cry and saw Skrimuti sitting at the trunk of the banyan.

“Skrimuti !” he said

“Where were you going to?” she asked him.

“I was restless and was wandering about. What are you doing here?”

“I have watched the sun set behind the Purbal and the evening is so beautiful that I am where you find me.”

“You are always watching sun-sets. Skrimuti, I must talk to you. To me you have been as beautiful as the sun and as lovely as the moon. You are as glorious as the day and as fascinating as the night. I have always

thought of you from the time I saw you, making hay. No woman appears in my dreams as you do, Skrimuti. But the very dreams are lovely. You are constant in my thoughts. Skrimuti, be not angry with me, but at times I pray to the gods, far away by the rocky mountains—I pray that I may possess you.”

Chowk sat down by her side, his entire body quivering in an ecstasy of delight. He held both her hands in his and Skrimuti let him do so. “You are not angry of what I have told you just now?”

“No I am not angry. I could not be angry with you, Chowk. I want love just as much as you do.”

She came closer, closer to him, and she held out her mouth to him as if to be kissed. He passed his hands through the dark, thick, tresses of her hair. Her hair fell over her shoulders and he caressed them. Then he held the girl very closely to his chest and each lover could hear the other’s heart-beats. He kissed her on the mouth and his kiss was hot and passionate. It was the lovely bondage of the love of two young souls. And the two lips remained fixed, each on the other.....

Then Chowk carried the lovely Skrimuti in his arms. Her two legs hung out and swung with the motion of Chowk's movement, her head fell back and her two arms lay clasped around her lover's neck. Chowk carried the girl far into the dark folds of the jungle and later—the two young lovers were lying side by side, naked, in a perfectly harmless and natural sleep.

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# **THE ALIEN.**

**TO SIR DHUNJIBHOY AND LADY BOMANJI.**

## THE ALIEN.

**I**T was a freezing November night with a heavy spell of a blizzard. The air was just too cold for a roaring fire and a dull modern novel. It was a characteristic chilly November night when great coats and furs and gloves were an absolute necessity. But there were men and women, thousands of them, who did not sit by a crackling fire with a modern novel but walked the streets of London, on an uncomfortable night like this. They walked the streets under the blizzard on pleasure bent and on sheer necessity. To roll in a car, however humble or ramshackle would have been a perfect haven.....

At the Temple Tube station, a little stream of people walked up towards the steps that inevitably lead you to the iron gates and the stern ticket collector and then to many ways, towards the Embankment and Charing Cross or

Blackfriars or through narrow Temple lanes and on to the life in the Strand. The little stream of people that got down on this cold night at the Temple walked briskly. Their steps were light, some actually jumped on the ground, possibly to give a greater force and tone to their circulation, and others rushed up the stairs, two and three steps at a time. There was a man in this medley of people—a tall, slim, well built, muscular, dark man with stern brown eyes, that were stern at one moment and most wistful and lovely the next—eyes that looked at the world with interest. This handsome man with the smooth, clear features and soft, clean shaven face, was most respectably clad in a well made and well pressed dark brown lounge suit and a light blue great coat. The bowler on his head gave him just the right touch, a distinguished air. His dressing was immaculate. But on a night like this, instead of carrying an umbrella, he carried in his gloved hands a horn-knobbed malacca. He followed the few men and women, slowly, as if the time and world were all his own. He walked up

the steps gradually and gave his little ticket to the spectacled, red-nosed collector.

He walked to the gates leading to the narrow law-lanes and on to the bright life of the Strand. But he stopped at the gates. It was snowing hard and the night was so cold. He cursed himself for being stupid and to have ventured out without an umbrella. Not a single taxi was to be seen. He must either proceed to the Strand and face the downpour of snow and get wet and sticky or wait where he was and watch events—either the disappearance of the blizzard or hail a passing cab. So he wistfully watched the little stream of men and women disappear—on to Blackfriars, Charing Cross and to the Strand—men and women with different destinies, wriggling with cold, foolishly, under their umbrellas and walking with brisk, agile steps on through the snow. The tall man with the bienganté air and the horn-knobbed stick looked around in front of him. The few men and women walking fast in the blizzard looked like strange phantoms gliding on softly into eternity, through the shadows of the night. Then he looked around him. The spectacled, red-no-

sed ticket collector was now sitting on a high stool, near to his gate. He was rubbing his hands vigorously. A young, fair-haired girl was sitting listlessly in the chocolate kiosk, looking at the bien-ganté man, who was standing near one of the exits. She was looking at him for distraction's sake, to kill time, and accompanied her amusement by playing an imaginative piano composition with her fingers. The key board of the piano was now the smooth surface of the kiosk where you payed your money and took the sweets. These two—the woman of the kiosk and the ticket collector, besides the wistful man at the exit, were not the only occupants of the entrance to the Temple Tube.

There was the man in the booking office, very likely blessing the cold night air and the blizzard, for this gave him some rest and he did not have to pull out tickets from their cosy little corners and push in dirty coppers. He was yelling out news to the old man with the venerable red nose, namely to the ticket collector.

The man, who was so nicely dressed and who was now looking at the empty Temple



lanes, was David Lanessor, who was known to his friends as the erratic, eccentric man. But he was good natured and very generous, all his friends knew that. David Lanessor moved away lethargically from the exit, leading to the Strand, to the gate facing the stone-walled, well-paved Thames Embankment, with Charing Cross and Blackfriars on either side. He watched the snow fall, fascinated as a child watches it. He watched the white, snow-covered ground, dirty in parts and very slushy. He watched the shadows of the electric lights falling strangely on the snow white ground, touching the white of the snow, expanding and dancing. He looked at the lights at a distance, on either side of him, and the lights twinkled faintly in this chaotic night air.

Lanessor turned round. The man from the little window of the booking office was still chatting to the ticket collector. The woman of the kiosk was still playing her piano piece. Lanessor moved towards the cigarette kiosk, which was now closed up. But he looked at the cigarette boxes and the tins with different colourings and tobacco packets, most cunning-

ly parcelled, and pipes and cigarette holders—he gazed at this smoking paraphernalia as if he did not know what they meant and as if he had never smoked a cigarette or a pipe. Then David turned round again towards the exit to the Strand but this time he did not approach it, for there stood a woman, short and slim, looking fixedly at Lanessor. And he looked at her too. When she had come and from where, David did not know. She must have come when he was watching the shadows of the electric lights dance on the snow. The little form of the short woman was clad in a dark green overcoat of a very common shape and a mediocre cut. The coat was the sort which a maid or a shop woman would wear. It was cheap. The wide turned down collar of the green coat was of plush and the sleeves were of course devoid of plush or fur. Cheap coats are like that. They make one bilious to look at them. Her little golden head, a mass of fuzzy fluff, was covered with a wide red felt hat, turned up. Her stockings were thick and her black leather shoes were equally tawdry. In her gloved hands, the woman held a dripping umbrella, which was now closed. In another

hand she held a small red-leather purse. She was eyeing David with interest. And David looked at her for at last here was some one else to look at. It was a change from looking at the two men yelling at each other and the chocolate seller playing her composition. David's first impression of her was that she was a work-girl, waiting for some one. Another little stream of men and women came up the steps and after giving their tickets to the collector, rushed out in the cold.

They were armed with umbrellas. But though some had no umbrellas they braved the blizzard and walked away regardless of the dirt or the sticky sensation that would follow. The woman in that green coat and the red felt eyed all the men wistfully. She eyed them boldly and even approached them nearer with the dripping umbrella. But the men passed her on. They were not in the right mood for women like her or they were too busy.

David's second impression of the young girl was that she was a lewd woman, a walker of the streets by night, an alien, a prostitute. But he pushed that idea away as odious, horri-

ble. He was not doing justice to the woman. Why should she be a courtesan? Cannot a woman look with interest at a man? Was that a crime? But the vision of a prostitute kept on recurring to David's mind.

"She is a prostitute.....She is a prostitute".....

David kept on thinking. Her looks were bold, enticing, fascinating; she looked at men as if ready to give herself up to any man that wanted her. The little stream of passengers passed on and David and the woman were still at their posts. Possibly the woman thought the man waited for her and she looked at David still fixedly. And David looked at her for he wanted to know who she was. Some more passengers came and still the woman gave bold looks to the men but the men did not speak to her, nor did she to them. And yet the thought that she was a harlot kept itself repeating to David.

"She is a prostitute....."

The woman shivered. She was cold and she was hungry. She was thinking of a time when a man, aged and stout but well dressed,

had picked her up, near to a jeweller's in Piccadilly, and had carried her away to a night club in Leicester Square. She had never gone to such a luxurious night club before.

The low divan where she had supped with the old man, the shaded lights, the lovely iced champagne, the exciting food, lobster salad and caviar, cold chicken and pêche melba had thrilled her. At the end of the night, when she had afforded bodily enjoyment to the old man, he had given her a five pound note. She was amazed with such a lovely price. Men usually gave her a pound or two. Yes, she was a failure, there was no doubt. Rich men did not have her. She was never well dressed. All prostitutes must be beautifully dressed. They must sparkle with jewels. And she had no nice clothes and lovely jewels..... what a fright her green coat was—how shabby her felt hat.....a prostitute should have a tiny French hat—yes, she was a failure..... and God! How hungry she was to night—would that man by the cigarette kiosk have her? He was a swell and could afford two pounds easily. But how could she entice him ?.....

David felt truly sorry for the woman. She was undoubtedly cold and hungry. His eccentric nature was now over flowing with goodwill and charity. He must help her. But how ? He could not go and give her money. That would be asking for trouble. He would be arrested for being a public nuisance. But he must help this woman. She was hungry.....

But how can he help her ? He cursed all the prostitutes. They were all feeble and helpless. Why did not they work honestly ? But then it was human nature to get as much comfort with as little trouble. And how would men find enjoyment without prostitutes ?

Of course every city had brothels, although some of the countries did not recognise them. After all prostitutes did not harm the public. They were like the rest of human beings, living their own lives, making money by their own peculiar profession.....Yes, David would help this woman, but how ? he could not and would not speak to her and tell her that he thought she was cold and hungry. He pulled out his wallet from his breast poc-

ket and took out a ten shilling note. He folded it carefully, kept it in his hands and put away the wallet..... In the meanwhile the blizzard was clearing away. Yes, now he could venture out of the station. He could not wait all night. It was slushy but David would leave the station. He would change his mind and go towards Charing Cross. He approached the woman. She was now looking at the streets. He was determined to help her. It was characteristic of David to do so. He was in an eccentric mood of charity. When he came very near to the woman, he dropped the note near her foot, picked it up quickly, took off his hat and said:

“ Madam, I think you have dropped your money.”

He thrust the note into the astonished grasp of the woman and walked away towards the Embankment and on to Charing Cross. He did not give her the time to remonstrate or to declare that it was not her money. The woman was staggered. This was the first time a man had been so charitably endowed towards her. She opened her purse and after looking long at the note, put it away. Did he want her

though? Well, what a queer way of proposing to her! Men did not propose the usual enjoyment to women like her in this way. She looked for him but her Don Quixote was gone.

David was waiting around the corner, Charing Cross way, to see whether the woman would follow him. He did not know how long he waited, but he watched the glistening snow, under the electric light and he watched every passer by that came his way. The snow crunched under the feet of the pedestrians and the sound was pleasing. David Lanessor was strangely happy for he had given charitable love to an alien, for he was now more than sure she was a prostitute—to one who was cold and perhaps hungry. The woman had looked so wistfully at him when he had pushed the ten shilling note in her hand .....Two people were coming from a distance. David watched them. Something red gleamed passionately in the lights. As the two figures came nearer, David was sure it was the prostitute, walking with somebody. Yes, it was she, hanging on the arm of a man, shabbily clad in a faded little overcoat and



the shapeless mass on his head was an old trilby. His hands were not gloved. He was talking rather inaudibly to the woman, hanging on his arm. So she was a prostitute, this woman who inflamed such a charitable love in David's bosom. As she approached the man, who stood on the pavement, she recognised David very well. And then she burst out into a horrible laugh. The laughter of the alien played about in the still night air and cracked frightfully. It was the laughter of victory—the laughter that a prostitute laughs in the hour of her triumph. And the woman with the old green coat and red felt hat walked on, hanging on the arm of a disreputable-looking man, laughing as she went Charing Cross way, and David Lanessor watched her disappear into the night.

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# **IMAGINATION.**

**TO HILDERIC COUSENS, Esq.**

## IMAGINATION.

**O**N a cool summer's evening, two men descended from the open French window and strolled on the well kept, hard gravel terrace, overlooking the sunken lawn. They approached a wooden bench with a Japanese design, placed angularly, at the entrance of the marble loggia. The men sat on the bench, side by side, and talked, puffing at their cigarettes.

"It is so ripping to see you again, Hodges, old fellow!" and Cave smiled, patting his friend affectionately on the shoulder, looking at him with his dreamy blue eyes. In moments of tense excitement his firm mouth would pucker up and Cave would look stern.

"Cave, you are the best natured of fellows. It is just like you to have me here in your palatial mansion. We meet after a very long time and things are changed—things are changed," said Hodges wistfully.

"They are!" exclaimed his friend very swiftly and in firm tones as if he was quite sure things had changed. "They are, by Jove! When you had last seen me three years ago—well, well! I had hardly a penny to bless my soul with and now! Lord! I am rich!"

That was so. Gerald Cave was no aristocrat, born with a golden spoon in his mouth. He had known poverty, he had experienced hard times. But an old maiden aunt had turned his fortune by leaving him all she died possessed of, including the Reigate House, the most wonderful mansion in the village.

"You are a lucky beggar," said Hodges, gazing at the red-bricked house.

"But I don't know where you would have been if it had not been for your aunt."

The two men inhaled the rich, deep, scent of the flowers that surrounded them and the pure, thin, air of the evening. Then, suddenly, Hodges turned his hazel brown eyes, the colour of his hair, towards his friend and asked almost abruptly:

"I say, Cave, is your house haunted?"

" Lord ! What puts that in your head of a sudden ? I suppose you are still interested in ghosts ?"

" Exactly !—I am interested in ghosts more than ever ! But I have not yet seen one !"

" Do you honestly wish to see a ghost ?" asked Cave earnestly.

" I do !—But why ?"

" Because two miles away from here, in a very deserted spot, there is a tumbledown house supposed to be haunted by an evil spirit which harms every one who sees it."

" Is that the truth ?" incredulously asked Hodges.

" Indeed I am not pulling your leg ."

" You excite my curiosity, so continue with the story."

" Well, it is supposed that this house is haunted by the evil spirit of an horrible old woman, who is said to have murdered her young step daughter in this house, some hundred years back. Both the ghosts of the mother and the daughter haunt the house and terrify superstitious people to such an extent that by dark they never dare to pass the house of the phantoms."

" This is very exciting ! Cave, do you know the exact situation of the house ? "

" I do—why ?"

" Because I wish to visit it at night and see the ghosts."

" You must not do so ! " put in his friend.

"But I must ! and I will ! so it's no good your arguing!"

"Then do it by all means ! I bet a hundred pounds you will be terrified."

"Agreed ! I take the wager that I am not frightened by the ghosts."

"When do you go there—to morrow?"

"Yes!"

"Then, tomorrow after dinner, I will take you there in my car and leave you in the haunted house. Hodges, old fellow, I do not envy you as I should not like to be there!" and Cave's eyes expressed horror.

Hodges, followed by his friend, Gerald Cave entered the little square room of the tumble-down house, supposed to be haunted. He looked round carefully and by the light of the candles took in every detail. The room and the four walls were almost devoid of any ornament or furniture. It was a dilapidated

room, consisting of old broken 'chairs and a square table. Besides the shattered doors, was a window, its shutters broken. The odour of this room was foul, it was heavy. Creepy feelings passed through the back of Cave and he shivered slightly.

"Here we are!" said he, looking round the room, "What a terrible place to be in! My dear Hodges, you had better be reasonable and return with me."

"Certainly not—not for the world, when I have always longed to visit a haunted house! No, Cave, I do not return to Reigate House until I see the ghosts and satisfy myself."

"Then good-bye and good luck."

The lighted candles were placed on a chair in a corner of the room, carefully secluded from any draught.

"You know, by our previous arrangement I can keep the candles."

"Yes, of course."

"And the revolver too."

"Certainly."

Cave had left. Hodges was all alone in the room. He looked around the room involunta-

rily and shivered. But at the next moment he reproached himself for his weakness and said:

"I must be brave and win the hundred pounds and see the ghosts."

But try as he may, he could not overcome the creepy, uncanny feeling that possessed him. He shivered. He was all alone in a horrible house away from human help. But he had a revolver in his overcoat pocket and patted it with affection.

"Good fellow! — Good fellow! — what need have I for fright when you are by me?"

Hodges had bolted the broken down door and fastened the window, which was so dilapidated. He took off his overcoat and spread it neatly on the ground. Folding his legs comfortably, he sat on it. The revolver lay by him. Thus he sat, guarded and safe from intrusion, either human or spiritual. He sat in the same posture for two hours till fatigued, he went off to sleep.

But it was not long that he slept. He was awakened by some mysterious, unearthly power. He awoke, terrified. Perspiration flowed from him freely. He looked wild-eyed about the room as if he expected it to be occu-



pied by some one besides himself. Then he shook with fright, although he was the only occupant. The wind outside the room howled piteously, the shattered shutters of the windows fluttered, and the door banged, as if some one was knocking at it. A cold, strange wind crept over Hodges and he instantaneously and involuntarily crouched further into the corner. His hands were pressed tightly to his breast as if he wanted to calm down the vigorous heart beats of his agitated self. He was frightened.

The wind howled and the door and the window continued to bang. A gust of wind swept into the room through the decrepit shutters and the candles flickered steadily until they went out and the room was in utter darkness. Hodges screamed, a low, piteous human scream. His own scream frightened him. He was not sure who screamed. He thrust his trembling, cold, clammy hands into his pockets and fumbled for matches. He struck one but it went out. He looked about him in the pitch darkness and he saw, in front of him, a huge, dark figure. He argued with himself that he was under a nightmare or that he was

dreaming. He firmly clasped the revolver in his hands. His fingers touched the trigger. The figure advanced towards him. As it drew very, very near to where he was sitting, crouched on the floor, he gazed at it wild-eyed like a lunatic. He saw that the figure was that of a stout old woman in shrivelled grey hair, and he could almost see the lines of old age on her stern, criminal face. Attired in rags, she stared at Hodges with her horrible expression. He screamed, again and yet again, and drew more into the corner, his whole body relaxed and limp with fright. The ghastly apparition stared at him.

Suddenly he saw something else move in the room. The figure that approached him was white. It stood side by side with the other phantom. It was the figure of a young woman. Its white, vague, filmy tissues shone luminously in the pitch darkness. Long suffering and pain were written on her gentle face.

Not enduring any more, Hodges rose, staggering to his cramped feet and fired a shot at the two phantoms. The closed small room rang loudly with the shot. Rings of

smoke arose in the darkness and the bullet passed through the bodies of the two phantoms. But as if to take revenge for the assault, the phantoms approached Hodges yet nearer. He fell down on the floor with a yell.

The wind proved to be too strong for the shattered window and it gave way. To it, Hodges ran. It was refuge to him. He would run out into the world, a fugitive of fright. His revolver still lay in his firm grasp. He leapt towards the window but the two ghosts stood in front of him, barring his way. He recoiled with unlimited horror. He was dumb with fright. He glared at the two figures by the open window. His mouth was wide open. He took an aim again and fired towards the phantoms. The bullet passed out in the open. The phantoms approached him, steadily, steadily.

Desperate, impulsive and wild, hardly knowing what he was doing, Hodges pressed the pistol against his temple, pulled the trigger and fell down dead on the floor.

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# **THE CHINAMAN'S HEAD.**

TO MY FRIEND, LT. COL.  
THE MAHARAJ NAHAR SHINGHI OF BARIA.

## THE CHINAMAN'S HEAD.

**D**REAMS are magnificently divine, horribly terrifying. God and the Devil are in dreams. He who dreams daily—dreams various and wondrously strange—is a most enviable man. I think the most regrettable thing about dreams is that one hardly reaches to the very end of them. When we reach the climax we are shaken terribly by an unseen hand and we awaken to find the darkness of night—a strange change from the realms of dreams. However, I once had the good fortune to get to the very end of my dream, which was a strange one. A friend of mine was recounting to me some of the sensational and terrifying tales of Sax Rhomer—Eastern colourings, Eastern men, yellow, wily Chinamen and their villainies. It was on a wintry day, after dinner, that I sat listening to my friend's accounts of the Sax

Rhomer stories. I had never read them nor did I wish to do so. But I wanted to listen to him reciting them to me. That same night in the silence of my room, as I lay sleeping, I dreamt this strange dream which I am to relate to you and which I choose to call the Chinaman's Head. As I said I had the good fortune to get to the end of my dream and then the next morning I jotted it down in my note book as far as I could join my dream up.

My very first impression of the dream was a beautiful bed room, white and blue, tastefully decorated with furniture to suit the soothing atmosphere of the colours. The walls of the bed room were snow white. The curtains on the windows and the door were blue. A large sofa which stretched near the bed was blue and gold, and so were the couple of chairs. The carpet, which covered the room from one end to the other, was pure blue, a deep one.

The bed was white and so were the couple of large cupboards and the tables, one large and one small. The former was placed near the sofa on which was a crystal bowl full of roses. The latter was installed near the bed and on it

were placed a reading lamp, a portable telephone, and a French novel. At the other end of the room, far away from the bed, was a large white dressing table with enormous mirrors. A tall, well-built and dark complexioned girl stood in front of a mirror, putting the finishing touches to her hair—raven black and wavy. At her back, standing close to her, was a trim lady's maid, in black and white.

"You will be late for dinner, Miss Leila", I heard the maid tell the dark complexioned girl. "Oh, never mind! Father's used to my being late.".....

My second impression of the dream is that I saw a dining room—a square room with white panelled walls. In the very centre was a small polished table with exquisite doilies and bowls of red roses and little silver sweet-dishes. The table was laid for two. The chairs were high and large with leather backs. At one end of the room was a carved sideboard, at the other was a sofa and two chairs. A pale streak of light was thrown from the Venetian crystal chandelier which was in the centre of the ceiling. A middle aged man was dining with the dark complexioned girl who was

resplendent in a pure white frock and a string of pearls.

I was surprised to see that a Chinese butler was fussing noiselessly around the table. He was dressed in a yellow, ochre robe. I noticed that his pig tail was huddled into a black, round skull cap. With him were two assistants. They were the footmen but they were not coloured men. The Chinaman kept on looking at the girl queerly and intently, a sort of look which would have made a girl feel uncomfortable. He was a small podgy man, his face a yellow clean shaven, expressionless, serene one—a sort of face which makes us distrust the Chinese. There was something at the back of this calm, cool face, hidden behind this mask of serenity, a deep hatred for those he hated and a passionate love for those he loved.

After the coffee and cigarettes had been served and the Chinaman and the footmen had retired behind the precincts of the *salle à manger*, Leila and her father were left to themselves. Between the sips of the coffee and the puffs of the cigarettes, I heard Leila speak. Her voice was sweet and low. Before speak-



ing, she hesitated, as if unwilling to let her father know her thoughts but in the end she did speak. She said, "Father, I do wish you'd sack Chang Wu! He indeed gets on my nerves. He is tiresome with his attentions to me. I do not like his going about the house always following me and looking at me so intently." Leila's father put the coffee cup down on the table and looked at his daughter in a genuine surprise.

"Goodness gracious! Why Leila! you speak as if Chang Wu were a spy or a loathsome, sensuous man! My dear child, he is perfectly harmless and remember he is my oldest and the best servant I have had. He might be following you about by mere chance and it is a sheer hallucination to say that he looks at you queerly—hallucination and nothing else!" Leila did not speak. Perhaps she could not. It was no use making her father see and believe that Chang Wu was an evil man. His looks at Leila had betrayed him and she disliked the Chinaman. But he was her father's oldest servant—yet certainly not the best, so Leila thought.

"I would not dream of sacking him, Leila! He is so thoughtful and considerate and such an excellent servant. Besides he has known you since you were a baby!" the middle aged man was saying. Taking no notice about Chang Wu, Leila's father recommenced sipping his coffee.....

My third impression of the dream was a garden—a garden rare and beautiful. Strange to say it was like a part of a garden that I know well for I had spent many happy hours there. In front of me, built out of marble, was an enormous statue of Venus. On either side of her were horses. Deep below, were nymphs and sirens in various postures—beautiful creatures of marble chiselled by the hand of some divine artist. And near these nymphs and sirens was a pond of white and red lotus. From the mouth of Venus there poured forth a cascade of clear white water and the naked nymphs and sirens revelled in the fountain-flow of the water and the bubbles of the crystal water glinted on the white marble of these bodies like glow worms. In front of this cascade of Venus was a small wooden bench and far, far away

at the other end of the garden were beds of red roses. Near the fountain of marble, squatting on the mossy lawn, sat Chang Wu, in a yellow ochre robe, his thin hands holding a slender bow, and poised against his breast was a thin Chinese violin. The sounds that he produced on the strings were frightful, at least so to Western ears. His eyes were closed and behind his mask of serenity was deep hatred and deep passion. As he sat there playing on his violin—a strange thing for a butler to do in a garden, but then dreams are strange and varied and wondrous—I saw that a figure wafted towards him in the sunlight of the garden, in a pink dress and a straw hat. The lady was Leila, lovelier than ever, holding in her hands a basket of violets. She stood motionless in front of Chang Wu. The Chinaman's sharp ears must have heard a sound though Leila walked so softly—for he opened his eyes and grinned at her with a sensuous pleasure. Leila was angry. She wanted to strike the Chinaman for his audacity in playing the fiddle in the garden and for his trying attentions to her, but something unseen and hidden—something un-

canny, either about her or within her, prevented her from doing so and instead of reproaching him, she walked steadily towards him. I heard her speak and she smiled so sweetly to the Chinaman. Her wrath had turned to a liking for the coloured, cunning man. "Chang Wu, play me something!" she said. Then I heard the Chinese play. He played a weird air, so full of uncanny, sad sounds. But towards the climax there poured forth on the strings several chords of a full and passionate nature and when I heard them, it reminded me of Chang Wu's own nature—so capable of deep hatred and deep love. Suddenly he stopped playing. He grinned again sensuously at Leila. "It is a love song of China!" he drawled, "a love song so powerful that if a maiden hears it, she falls in love with the man who plays it!"

Leila shuddered. But she was no longer angry. Suddenly Chang Wu flung the violin away and rose and walked towards Leila, his arms outstretched. She dropped her basket and looked aghast and white at the yellow Chinaman. "Listen!" he cried huskily, passionately, "Listen! There is a legend connected

with this tune. A young, handsome soldier from the Guards of the Emperor, many and many a year back, fell passionately in love with the Princess Pei-Pei. She was young and as beautiful as an orange blossom, and he felt he must possess her. The princess committed suicide to escape the attentions of the soldier. She turned into a lotus in a great pond. When the soldier knew how Pei-Pei, his young orange blossom, had gone away from him, he went to the pond and played the tune I now played to you. The princess returned to earth and the soldier possessed her."

Leila shuddered again. She looked at the Chinaman who was grinning so sensuously while he was advancing towards her. She trembled. With a passionate cry the Chinaman took Leila in his arms. But I saw that Leila was not yet angry. Her head had fallen down on his shoulder and he was speaking fast. "Is it any use my hiding from you, Leila, that I love you? You are my orange blossom, my Princess Pei-Pei. I love you with an unconquerable love, Leila! unlike your men who might love you only temporarily. I want you. I want you, Leila!— my young orange blossom!"

She was shaking in every limb. She was dumb. But the Chinaman was cool and calm as he always was. He no more grinned sensuously. But he was holding her tightly, tightly, towards him and he was hungrily kissing her on the lips. "I want to hear your heart beats closely, closely towards mine!" he was saying .....

My fourth impression of the dream was a large room, packed with books from top to bottom in handsome book cases. It was a sanctum. At the writing table, at the further end of the door, sat Leila's father and facing him stood Leila. She was still in pink but her sun-bonnet was not on her head and her basket of violets was not in her hands. Her raven black hair fell untidily about her face and she was still nervous and white. I heard her father speak. He was angry, terribly angry. His face was white and red in turns and he spoke huskily.

"My God ! My God ! Leila ! you are mad ! mad ! mad !" he was saying. "No", came from her lips in firm tones, "Not mad ! I love Chang Wu and I mean to be married to him ! That's all, father !"

" God ! Girl, you are mad, I say ! the other night you were telling me you disliked Chang Wu and wished him to be gone. Now, you say you wish to be married to him !"

" The past is past, father. It is for the present I speak. I wish to marry Chang Wu. He loves me more than any white man can or will ever do ! He loves me with all his passionate nature. "

"Marry a damned beastly Chinaman!" came from her father. And as I lay sleeping and dreaming, I heard the father swear at the Chinaman and at his daughter. Volley after volley of oaths came forth but Leila was immovable and placid, although so ashen white. But when her father came to the end of his swearing and the banging of his fists on the table and the etceteras of anger, he laughed. And then he chuckled. And behind his chuckle I could see that he had hit upon some monstrous, wicked thought. He gave his consent to Leila but said she must accept from him a little wedding gift, just before she was married to Chang Wu.....

My fifth impression was a small room full of little tables and books and writing materials

and polite clerks and page boys. It was an office. Leila was there, dressed in the latest French model and with her was a dark haired foreign woman.

"How late Chang Wu is—how late Chang Wu is!" I heard Leila murmur to the foreign lady.

"Oh, don't worry!" came the answer, "Chang Wu will come! he will come of course!"

"Mademoiselle Ronen, I feel nervous, very nervous!"

"Of course, you dear child, you are nervous! I wish you were not about to marry a Chinaman. A girl friend of mine did so and the man eventually got so jealous that he poisoned her! Dear me, Leila, I wish you were not going to marry a Chinaman."

Leila did not listen to the conversation but kept on murmuring how late Chang Wu was.

The office door opened and in came her father. He bore the same wicked chuckle. He did not speak to her but he gave her the promised wedding present. She took it in her hands. It was a heavy odious thing but she did not drop it. She held it firmly against her bosom and began to unstring the huge



brown paper parcel. Paper after paper was thrown on the floor but she had not come to the end. Suddenly she gave a terrific shriek and the yellow, cold and calm head of Chang Wu, made horrible and ugly with thick blood, fell on the floor, at the feet of Leila. It fell with a ghastly thud and then it rolled away from Leila's feet—it rolled away covering the floor with blood.

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**AVE MARIA—SCHUBERT.**

**TO SIR NORMAN C. MACLEOD**

## AVE MARIA—SCHUBERT.

**T**HE rain was falling heavily and the night was cold and dark. A man, shivering in the sable night, and soaked with the rain, walked briskly towards the mud and wood huts of the village of Gheri. He was clothed in baggy, cotton trousers and a rough woollen coat. Over his white turban was thrown a burnoze. The man slowed down his speed as he approached the village and stood in front of the very first hut, which was small and decrepit, built of a few wooden pillars and plastered with mud. It was surprising how these frail huts stood the tempest. The door of the hut, in front of which the man stood, was a fragile piece of wood, broken and repaired in many parts, and it was fastened up from inside. The man knocked with his well-nigh frozen knuckles. Then came a voice to him from the inside. It was that of a man.

"Who is it ?"

"A man who is hungry and cold and wet seeks shelter for the night."

Then the broken down door was opened and an old man stood holding it, looking at the stranger, wanting the shelter.

"You are hungry and cold and wet and so you shall have shelter and food. My home is humble as you see and my board poor, but sir, you are welcome."

Then he stood aside for the stranger to enter. The stranger entered and as he did so, he lifted up his burnoze from his turban and squeezed the water at the entrance.

"We were about to sit down to our food, and sir, you shall have some with us, and get warm."

The stranger thanked his old host for his kindness. They were not alone in the room. On the floor, in front of the clay plates and jugs, squatted a young woman of uncommon beauty. Her wondrously pale face was whiter than snow and her thick, black hair fell loosely about her body and over her buff and white peheran. She was bareheaded, but as soon as there came the stranger on the threshold

she covered her head with the customary white cloth, which the Cashmere women use. From the tips of her ears penduled large, round, silver rings and on her nose glittered a little piece of a passionate ruby. Her large dark brown eyes gazed at the stranger, who, in his turn, was looking intently at the lady of the house, for then the host was saying:

"Sir, here is my wife and my little son."

The little boy, yet a small child, was huddled up next to his mother. The host and the stranger also sat around the earthen plates on which were spread brown bread, round and very thin, and a large dish of maize boiled in milk. And as the stranger sat at this poor but substantial fare, he thought of the beautiful woman beside him and he compared her to the moon.....

When the sun slowly rose on a landscape now strangely calm and beautiful after the previous night's storm, and as the warm golden sunbeams danced on the foaming waters of the Jhelum and the deep jade green of the mountains, a woman, lovely in appearance and form, came lightly singing to the ghaut, with a round earthen vessel for the water. A

man was waiting at the ghaut and the woman who came singing with such a light, happy heart, was the wife of the cartman, who gave shelter to the stranger when he was cold and hungry. And the man who waited at the ghaut, feasting deeply on the beauty around him, was the stranger of the night who sought shelter. He took the earthen pitcher from the woman's hands, who now stopped her singing at the sight of him, and gave it back to her, filled with water. At night the woman was beautiful, but by day, she glittered like the dawn, and the man spake to her. His voice was sweet and fascinated her strangely.

“Is it not strange, lady, that one so beautiful in appearance and perfect in form, should be allied to a man, decrepit and old, a man devoid of fascinations and youth?” And the woman put her vessel on the ground and listened to the strange words of the stranger. She had scarcely spoken to men in her life and the only man whom she knew well was her old husband. Her life had been dull and she did not comprehend her daily dull routine of life until this young stranger of bewilde-

ring charms had spoken to her. She listened to his talk as one mesmerised, fascinated.

"Lady, what do you know of pleasures forbidden and the loves of youth? You, who are so young, are ignorant of passions and the dreams of love. You are for ever joined to a man who cannot afford you pleasures, a man old and not fascinating. Is there lustre in his eyes? Is his voice sweet? Is his body of a fine physique? He does not afford you pleasures, lady. Would you not like to taste of that which is forbidden, that which is a dream, that which to youth and beauty is irresistible? Would you not care to shake your soul, so young, from the fetters of bondage and society, and give yourself just once to one who adores you with his fiery soul and passionate love? Lady, could you not love me once? Perhaps I will never cross your life again. But I will carry with me the image of your lovely face and form and to me you will be like the moon that shines in the dark blue skies."

And the woman listened to the talk of the stranger, so young and passionate, and she passed her hands through her head for she was strangely fascinated and puzzled.

But later the man had conquered and the woman had promised him a tryst that day.

And before the fierce sun had set behind the gigantic mountains, playing about their peaks, turning them purple, and the last dying sunbeams had danced on the waters of the Jhelum, the lovely woman came, alone and determined, to taste of forbidden pleasures, to the man who waited for her, far away from the village. Overhead the birds were shrieking as they went to the tree-tops and the majestic forms of the poplars swayed in the evening breeze.

The man was hungry with love for the woman so beautiful and when she came to him closely, he kissed her passionately on the mouth. And the woman allowed the stranger to slip her peheran from off her white shoulders.....

In the twilight, the woman went home with a heavy heart for she had sinned against her husband and betrayed his trust in her and she cast down her eyes as she entered her home, ashamed. And the stranger, the young, fascinating stranger, left the village, after he had appeased his mad hunger of love and he walk-



ed onwards the path of sin. But his eyes were tear-dimmed and his soul was sick as he had sinned against the man who had given him shelter when he was cold and food when he was hungry.

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# **THE INNOCENT.**

**To Pogo.**

## THE INNOCENT.

**T**HE history of France began when the Bastille—the hideous monument erected to an ugly aristocracy, crumpled to the dust. Hitherto the destiny of France was moulded into the most absurd history by pleasure loving, licentious, unChristian kings and crafty, ravenous ministers. Only the aristocrats, the titled and the wealthy few, mattered. It was said that the poor were born to slave for the rich. A nation becomes great only when it has swum in her own blood. So the dawn of a great era in the French history began with the power of the poor who drank deep of revenge and for a time France became mad. And the most vital factor in the Revolution was power. It is only power—physical and political—that can mould the history of a nation in a most beautiful form. And the power came from the poor and with

them came the real greatness of France. Danton, the idol of the nation, the brave, lion-hearted giant, Robespierre, the dull, oratorical, vindictive, midget, and Marat the immoral, leprous, horrible, crumpled little man, were the kings of the country, the gods of the people.....

Laughter, shrill, hysterical, came from a cell of the Temple. The most putrid odours came from this small room and vermin and rats thrived on the frightful dirt, that reeked in the cell. There were about four women in the small space allotted them, where only two could move with ease. They were dirty women, in prison clothes, odorous clothes, smutty clothes. One of them was an old woman. She was coarse and indulged in indecent jokes at which the other two laughed. She could not have been an aristocrat for she was one of the canaille. And information said she was imprisoned to be guillotined for having given weighty political news to the English. The two women who laughed at the hag's jokes were young, but the vermin-reeking prison clothes aged them considerably. They were wont to use rouge, lots of it, and the most expensive cos-

metics and scents, and the most delicate silks, and in their sophisticated states they succeeded in being young and sparkling. They were coarse actresses, supposed to have been Marat's mistresses. But why they were to be guillotined, there was more than one answer. The fourth, a young and beautiful girl, in the vermin-reeking cell never laughed at the jokes of her fellow prisoners. She was stately, majestic, even in her misfortune. She was above the canaille. She could not laugh at their coarse jokes and vulgar banter. She hardly conversed with them. She was always dumb, as if dazed with her present condition. And the three women laughed at her and made jokes about her. They did not call her "citizeness," although everybody called everybody else a "citizen" and a "citizeness", but on purpose they called her the Countess. It was not a pet name but a name which the beautiful young girl bore with her birth and rank. She always sat in a corner of the sunless dark cell, and sometimes only played with the rats that abounded.....

Alice, Countess Puleries, was still in her teens. Once the most beautiful Parisienne, now, she cut a sad figure in her prison clothes. Her beauty had considerably withered but she did not forget her rank and her birth. Her eyes, that were like two sparkling stars, were now dull and lustreless. Her skin, which was once whiter than snow, and softer than velvet, was now dirty and thick. Her lips and mouth, once lovely in their redness and perfect in the shape, were now parched and bleeding. But her glory was in her hair. They were thick and golden and used to fall, when not dressed, over her waist, touching her knees. The golden, thick tresses used to dazzle with a great brilliance in the light and all that was left her now was a bit of golden scrap, that hardly touched her neck. Her hair was shorn off. All the female prisoners to be guillotined were close cropped. Alice Puleries was a beautiful young heiress, the only child of a most aristocratic couple.

The Countess had died long before the new ideas of democracy and equality, fraternity and liberty, and Alice thanked God that her mother was not alive to see the great upheaval

that the canaille of France, the sans culottes of the Revolution, had wrought. The house of Puleries had fallen. Alice was the last issue of a long line of aristocrats and with her death the family must dwindle. The château was burnt down; the treasures ransacked and the old Count captured. Count Puleries was an aristocrat in the full sense of the word. He was haughty, proud, wealthy, pleasure loving and somewhat strange to the poor. His strange behaviour to the poor was put down by them at the time of his trial as "cruel". That he had maltreated his tenants was true. But then all the aristocrats, all the landed people, were cruel to the tenants and Augustin de Puleries' behaviour was the behaviour of many men like him. That went against him. The accusers brought witnesses who had seen that the Count had ordered one farmer to be whipped to death for not bringing sufficient produce to him; another farmer was killed by his veins being cut open and molten lead poured in, for he had failed to pay the annual rent due to the Count. And there were ugly rumours that the Count had seduced a beautiful young girl of the peasants. And at the Great

National Convention where the genius of Robespierre, Marat, and Danton had blossomed so luxuriantly, where the titled quaked and sat uncomfortably at the birth of the new and dangerous political precepts, there Count Puleries rose to defend his brethren but was sadly squashed and grossly insulted by the seething mass in the galleries and the clever, diabolical politicians. Soon followed the Count's capture. There was the usual trial, nothing but a mock trial, where prisoners like him, both male and female, were accused and not allowed to defend themselves. The trials generally lasted but ten minutes and then came the inevitable, odious words of the President: "TO DEATH"

And the Count died as many others like him had done and his country drank his blood—the blood that by right belonged to her.

Alice, the daughter, was away from Paris when the Count was arrested as a damned aristo. Her flight to England was arranged. She was to masquerade as others of her rank did. To some it was a noble sport, a jolly adventure to disguise themselves and fly across



the Channel. To others it was agonising, to leave their own country, houses, wealth, to seek shelter in a strange country of foreign people. Alice was to go as a peasant woman. Her name was changed to Mauratmier and she actually got a passport. And so she trudged Paris on foot, with many others, to seek safety, fatherless and poor, in England. At the North gates of the city where the Calais road met, Fate played a trick to Alice. One of her gardeners was now an orderly at the North gate and he was a blood-thirsty Republican. When her turn came, the passport handed over and found en règle, she was about to go onwards, when she saw her gardener and gave a frightful start. Her mouth was wide open and she was terrified lest he should recognise her, even in her disguise. She stood firmly on the ground as she could not move for fear. Her passport fluttered in her grasp and fell on the floor.

"Move on! move on! the next one in!" screamed out the Chief Officer.

Alice took the passport and moved on. The gardener had recognised her but he let her go. Then he turned to his chief.

"What was the name of this woman who left now?"

The chief looked up the register.

"Alice Mauratmier."

"She's not ! She's Alice, Countess de Puleries. "

"Good God ! Then why the devil did you not say so ? are you sure?"

"Quite, citizen. She has a scar on her forehead. I could not possibly mistake Alice Puleries' scar. Arrest her immediately." Alice had not moved a hundred yards when the Republican soldiers approached her group. Her heart gave a wild throb. She staggered, she tottered. One of the men touched her and said :

"I arrest you in the name of the Republic as an enemy and an aristo of the country."

Her arrest betrayed several of her friends and so the group were taken back to the city for the trial and the subsequent imprisonment .....

The little cell of the Temple prison was sunless and as the evening far approached, it grew very dark within. The door creaked and the warder entered.

" You all must go to day. Come, hurry up, " he said laughing frightfully. " After you are gone I will have less trouble."

" Come now !" croaked the old woman, " you might have worse ones than us, you know !"

They laughed.

" Hurry up !" shrieked the warder, " The tumbrils await you downstairs."

Alice Puleries was shaken out of her day dreams, her memories. She gasped. She stood up, faint and white, a ghastly spectre of agony. The warder pushed her out roughly and the two actresses and the old hag followed.

Downstairs, in the courts, were the death-carts, the tumbrils. Alice stood on the cobbled court and shivered, for it was after a couple of weeks that she saw the world outside her. The sun was fast setting. The clouds were on fire, passion coloured. In front of her were several tumbrils wherein stood prisoners, old and young weak and healthy, men and women. They were all dazed, stupefied. They looked wild, mad, for they were going, one and all, to death. One orderly came and hurled Alice into a cart. The indecent hag and the two actresses

also found places. It was strange but they were not hysterical.

"Well Countess !" shrieked the hag "You will meet your venerable father, the Count, to-day."

She laughed with her two companions as if her joke were rare. Several fierce men, half-naked, bloody, dirty, dressed in torn trousers, with knives in hand, heard the word Countess.

"Who dares to use the word Countess ? There shall be no titled people soon. All the damned aristos must die. Vive la Republique!"

Alice was unconscious of all that passed around her. She was as one half faint, half dead.

The tumbrils began to move, slowly, steadily, to death. The jolting, slow movement of the cart revived her. The evening air, calm and lovely, as one ignorant of all that passed in the world, refreshed her. She breathed in the balmy air. It was like food and wine to one deprived of air and sun for such a long time. The ominous drums rumbled and the carts marched on to Eternity. People stopped in the streets and looked on amused, happy.

They jeered and pelted the prisoners with stones and mud and filth. The house tops were crowded, the windows of the houses filled.

The nation was out to see her victims march to death and they were happy, for it demonstrated their power. Pieces of glass, dirty cakes, rotten eggs came flying into the tumbrils and hit the prisoners. It was the national sport to torture the condemned, twice daily, as the tumbrils crawled to the Place de la Concorde. Alice, her hands bound at her back, standing with difficulty in the cart, was hit with glass that cut her face and filthy eggs that dirtied her.

Some of the prisoners were crowned with thorns by the rabble who watched them go to death.

On Alice's head was also placed a crown of thorns. What must have her father suffered? and was it true that there would be no more titled people in France, her lovely France? She sent up a prayer to God to save her France and to forgive those who were killing her fellow prisoners and herself. She whispered:

"They murder us for they know not what they do in the hour of their victory."

In the distance she saw men and women dance. They danced madly, frenziedly. They clashed against each other and they jumped on the ground like lunatics. They were drunk with success, humming as they swung in the dance to the maddening music that some one played. The men were half-naked, in tattered trousers with wounded breasts, knives in hand, and the women were scantily dressed. They one and all had the red cockades and they were dancing the dance of the Republic.....

The guillotine loomed in the air like a hideous skeleton, spreading out its two arms to crush her people in a last, deathly embrace. It was clear cut and ghastly against the evening sky. There was blood on the sky and blood on the guillotine. The tumbrills stopped and Alice was unconscious of what went on. But the prisoners, one by one, were pushed towards the bloody eminence. Around the guillotine and in front of her sat the people, watching. They watched their own country people and others die. They watched the last agonies of the condemned and gloried in

them. At the foot of the guillotine, sat women, mostly middle aged, knitting steadily on and mutely. But the klick and klick of the long needles died away in the maddening noise of the seething crowd out to see death.

Prisoners were pushed on and a man, naked save for a loin cloth, and perspiring, let the gory knife on to their heads. Every minute one head fell into the basket.

A Commissioner was reading the names of the prisoners. All Alice could hear was her own name shrieked out by the officer :

“ Citizeness Alice Puleries. ”

And she found that she was on the ground and thrust towards the guillotine—an innocent, paying for the sins of her fathers. She was hurled towards the knife in an unconscious state.

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# **MINUET—BOCCHERINI.**

TO MIRZA M. ISMAIL, ESQ.,  
C. I. E., O. B. E., AMIN-UL-MULK,  
THE DEWAN OF MYSORE.



## MINUET—BOCCHERINI.

**T**HROBBING, throbbing it came, from a distant, firmer, louder, throbbing it came, rumbling like a fairy music, over the housetops and through the streets. Along the streets there lined into dense strings, people in their most delicate tunics, gayest turbans, dazzling jewels. They stood expectant of the great affair, they stood happily in anticipation of seeing their ruler. And on the verandahs and the turrets of the houses and by the windows, the passionate colours of the lovely women's saris scintillated with luxuriant brilliance in the sunshine. Men, more men, perched up on the tree tops and on the roofs of the houses and strained their ears to the fairy music that came nearer, nearer, throbbing, getting firmer. Half naked coolies ran about the clear kept path of the streets and fussily busied themselves, clearing off any dirt that was visible.

This was the birthday of the ruler of a certain native state of India and as was his wont, he set out in a procession all through the principal streets of his city. His people loved the glowing pomp and the brilliant show. A fanfare of the trumpets was heard. The drums beat, the reed-pipes and the long slender flutes played, the tambourines clashed, the strings of the guzla and the Indian violins ecstatically gave out passionate sounds. The whole orchestra, ensemble, quivered with joy. Two peons came forward with bugles and there was a fanfare, the signal of the royal arrival. Then came the mobile band. It was the native band of over a dozen men, dressed like the peons, in loose robes of green with red kumer bands and tight red turbans. And as the men moved rhythmically, slowly with deliberate steps, they brought out lovely sounds on their pipes and violins and drums. The dancing girls pressed forward, young girls dressed in the most delicate silks. Dazzling jewellery glittered on their soft, white bodies and there were rings on their toes which sent peals of tinkling bells—lovely bells as the girls danced like ethereal fairies

to the rhythm of the mobile band. The long lines of the men in the streets and the women in the houses and men, more men, on the tree tops and the turrets all looked with delighted pleasure, ecstatic joy at the swaying forms of the lovely dancing girls, who displayed their art in the open streets. The men gazed at the perfect symmetrical lines of their bodies that poetically danced to the public gaze. Following the dancing girls came the personal slaves of the rajah, half naked, their black, swarthy bodies shining like slabs of ebony in the sunshine. After the slaves walked the durbaris—young and old durbaris, in long strings. They one and all displayed their wealth in the shape of the most costly silks and jewels. Carved Eastern sabres penduled on their waists, the handles of which were set in chrysolites and beryl stones. In this medley of men and women, this seething mass, mobile and immobile, all come out to the national rejoicing, the elephant made his appearance, in whose howdah sat the rajah. The beast moved slowly, swaying from the side to side, crawling on the ground, snorting, curling his trunk up and down in the air. His enormous

back was caparisoned with silks and shawls fringed with the thinnest net work of gold and silver. And on this heap of loveliness was set the howdah, carved out of silver, on the tops of which were embossed solid pieces of emeralds and diamonds. The rajah sat placidly in the howdah, immobile as a statue. Only his bust could be clearly seen, for the rest of his body sank in the howdah. Men and women and little children from all sides hailed him and the streets rang with chaotic greetings. Sepoys, tall, majestic men of perfect physique, walked on either side of the elephant, holding in their hands tapering spears. Preceding the princess came the royal suite. The last of the procession was finished with the palanquin of the princess. The long poles of the palanquin were borne by eight half naked slaves. Slowly they bore her, softly they walked the streets in their bare feet. The palanquin had a canopy which was covered with thickly embroidered curtains. The people could not see the princess but she could see them. She reclined in the palanquin, the folds of her beauteous sari spread on either side of

her feet. She looked with interest on all that passed around her. In her hand was a huge peacock-feathers fan and she swayed it continually. Her long and tapering fingers were loaded with jewelled rings. From her ears there fell in thick lumps, large rotund ear-rings of pearls and her bare bosom was loaded with thick pearl ropes. Her dark brown hair was hidden in her sari. A few women of her suite followed her covered palanquin.

While she swayed her peacock fan, whose hundred colours glinted and played magic in the sun, it suddenly dropped from her hand and fell from the covered palanquin on the street. From either side came the cries of:

"The princess' fan! She has dropped it!"

The palanquin stopped with a sudden jerk. The eight half naked slaves looked at the fan as if doubting whether they ought to pick it up. And from the curtains, the princess strained her eyes to see where her fan had slipped to from off her hands. The women of her suite were away from the palanquin and therefore a man had to pick the fan. But every man was in an uncertain physiological doubt and in

that moment of uncertainty there came forward one slave from the eight who bore the royal palanquin. He picked up the fan and went towards the curtains, hesitatingly. The princess gazed at his half-naked, jet black, well formed, symmetrical body and drew the curtains back a little. She looked at him and at his lovely black body while his black eyes gazed at her loveliness in dumb ecstatic admiration. His first impression of her was that she was more beautiful than a cool, crystal lake or lovelier than the loveliest white lily. Her white face, somewhat covered in the passionate red and gold sari, dazed him. She held out her jewelled hand to him for her fan and he gave it to her, still gazing at her, his handsome black face, flushed with excitement. She took the fan. Their hands touched for a moment, for a second, but that touch was magical to both the princess and the slave. She drew the curtains together and the slave went forth to his pole to bear the lovely lady softly and slowly through the streets. But the hearts of both the princess and the slave were heavy, uneasy. The sight of that half naked black body haunted the princess and the

loveliness of the princess dazed the slave. But he bore her through the streets slowly and softly.....

Not a shadow of a man crossed the chamber of the princess but the form of that half naked slave filled her with desire and one night he was smuggled into the royal chamber. She met him again in that passionate red-gold sari, she met him with jewels on her body. Her dark brown head was uncovered and her hair was neatly dressed, parted in the middle of her forehead. Her slender white arms were bare and she outstretched them with love towards this strange, black slave. They clung to each other with a passionate joy. She passed her hands through the long tresses of his thick black hair and on to his face. But he looked at her madly, fixedly, and gave her hot burning kisses on the mouth .....

The rajah and his entire court came to know of the intrigue of the princess with the slave. The rajah bore the blow meekly. His name was dishonoured, so the princess and her lover must pay the penalty. It was whispered at court amidst the durbaris that the prin-

cess would have to march through the streets, dressed in the coarsest of clothes, to the gaze of men. Her lover, the slave, would be flayed alive and his corpse thrown to the dogs.

In the night came the slave to his princess. They were both silent. They would both be punished. The princess would not be allowed within the precincts of the palace after she had marched through the streets. The slave held in his hand a small white paper packet. He looked at his beautiful princess in mute sorrow, dumb agony. He opened the packet and she saw therein two small powder pills, smaller than the smallest peas. He put one on his palm and held it out to her.

"Eat it!" he said huskily. His voice failed him and shook with emotion and he stifled a sob. "Eat it!"

"Why?" asked the princess.

"Because it will end your sorrows.

"Death?" asked the princess.

"Death!" replied her lover and he held the pill towards the mouth of the princess, "eat it!" he repeated.

"I am afraid to die—I am afraid to face the unknown. Where shall I be? With whom



shall I dwell after I am dead? Oh! I am afraid of death!" and holding her head in her hands, she sobbed.

"Do you regret what you have done?" asked the slave, the poisoned pill on the palm of his hand.

"No! If I lived over the life again I would choose thee as my mate, my lover. Was it a sin to love thee? Our love was beautiful. Yes, I would love thee again if I had to go through my life again."

"Then eat it!" said the slave and once again he held the pill to her mouth.

"Oh, I am afraid to die."

"Remember, I shall be flayed alive and thou shalt march through the streets, exposed to the gaze of men. Eat it."

She sobbed.

But she came closer to him, closer to his breast, as if she were terrified of her own self. She opened her mouth and he thrust the pill into it. Then he ate the other one. They both sat silently, close together in the last embrace of love.....

Thus they were found, later, in their last embrace of love—two corpses lying side by side. Their dead hands were firmly clasped together and strange smiles played about their dead, distorted lips.

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**THE SQUARE OF  
IMMORTALITY.**

**TO THE LADY RATAN TATA, C. B. E., J. P.**

## THE SQUARE OF IMMORTALITY.

**T**HROUGH the open archway leading to the beautiful Durbar came the figure of an old man. As he neared the throne he fell upon his knees, then bowed his head until it touched the inlaid mosaic of the floor.

"Who are you and what do you want?" asked the Rajah. "I am an old hermit to whom has come knowledge of your greatness and your justice. So to you I bring a talisman of marvellous virtue, for to whomsoever possesses it, there is no death."

He produced a very tiny, square piece of glass, on which were written some holy words in Sanskrit.

"There is a history connected with this talisman," continued the hermit, "it was given to my guru by the high priest. But my guru had done his duty, he had prayed and his soul was fit to see God, therefore he gave it to me

and died. Now my soul is also ready to depart, so I ask you, my lord, to accept it."

The Rajah took the charm and the hermit murmuring his thanks, departed.

"He is mad, I think, Ganga," the ruler said to his prime minister. "So to please him I accepted the charm."

"I am not sure that he is mad, my lord."

"What ! must I believe that the talisman has real powers?"

"Even so, my lord, the person who has it, is immortal. I have heard of it since I was a boy."

"If this thing really makes the possessor of it immortal, and if I keep it, of course I shall live for ever," reflected the Rajah after he had dismissed his counsellor, "but is it worth while? I will see my heir die, my minister, my courtiers, my wives. Savitree, my favourite, will die, and without her I cannot live. No, no, I cannot keep the talisman."

The Rajah rose and passed across the courtyard to the zennana.

On a low, green, silken couch rested the Ranee Savitree, her eyes fixed on the ceiling, as if she waited impatiently for some one.

Near her, on the floor, a slave was playing the guzla and singing.

As soon as the Rajah entered, the music ceased and the attendant slipped away.

"So you have come at last, my lord," said the Ranee softly.

"Yes Savitree, I am late, for I was thinking."

"Of what were you thinking, my lord?"

"I thought of something which I want you to accept."

"What is it, a diamond or a ruby?"

"Another diamond when your breast is covered with diamonds?"

"No my lord, these are quite enough. But what is this new thing my lord would give to his servant?"

"Take off all the diamonds, Savitree."

The Ranee took the gems away and waited for the Rajah's reply, her bare brown bosom rising and falling with her soft breathing.

"You look prettier so than with these gems. See." He held out the talisman.

"A piece of glass," exclaimed the Ranee.

"An old hermit gave it to me. The holder of it is supposed to be immortal. So I want you to keep it."

"But you my lord?"

"I must think of my son. No, Savitree, I cannot."

The Ranee considered. Why should she be immortal when the Rajah would be dead? She would not be able to live in luxury. She thought of her lover, Zulficar, the handsome soldier, a member of the Rajah's personal Guards. She would accept the charm and give it to Zulficar.

"How could I refuse you, my lord?" she asked sweetly, and placed the charm carefully in a silver casket, which stood on the ivory table by the couch.

At day break the Ranee woke. Zulficar was bending over her, a smile on his dark face. She threw her arms about him and drew his mouth down to hers.

He had known the Ranee formerly when she was a dancer in one of the villages. Then the Rajah had heard of her great beauty and saw her dance in the Durbar room. She was at once sent to the zennana, and in a short time became the chief Ranee. She soon tired of this life, however, and bribed the slaves around her, with the result that Zulficar had

been smuggled into her room daily for over a year.

"You look unhappy, Savitree! What is the matter?" he said.

"Zulficar, will you promise me something?"

"Yes, can I refuse you anything?"

The Ranee told the story of the talisman.

"But when you are dead, Savitree, what can I do if I am immortal?" the young man asked.

"Oh, you will soon forget me. You must take it. Don't leave it here! open that casket and you will find it inside."

In a dirty little bungalow, at the foot of the hill on which stood the palace, the soldier lived with his mother. The place was full of foul odours.

Sitting on the ground beside his low, rickety bed, he thought of the talisman.

"The Ranee has given me the charm and wants me to be immortal." So ran his reflections. "I am weary and do not wish to slave more than is possible. Besides, what is the good of living forever when the person whom I love most will die? I must give the charm away to Ainee when she comes to-night. I



won't tell her the mystery. I'll simply tell her the skeleton of the story, and she might perhaps like to have it."

A woman entered the room. Her small, slim figure had mysterious charms. Intoxication lurked in her dark eyes, sweetness in the rounded curves of her young limbs.

"Dearest, I have been thinking of you," Zulficar said, putting his arms around her, "I want to give you this." He hung the little square of glass around her brown neck. "Whoever has it becomes immortal. I want you to keep it. Will you do so Ainee?"

"But I don't want to be immortal. Please keep it yourself."

"I won't, I can't! Don't ask me any more questions, keep it."

She would easily get rid of it somehow if she wanted to.

"Very well, Zulficar! It shall be as you wish. But who gave it to you?"

"Never mind that." He pressed her to him and kissed her.

Ainee visited the soldier night after night when her husband was on guard at the palace. No one knew of her visits except Zulficar's

mother, who was too old and tired to have any morals.

Ainee sat in the corner of the hovel that was her home, her head buried in her hands. The meal she was cooking was beginning to burn, but she paid no attention to it.

“ There must be some reason why Zulficar gave me the charm. Perhaps he shrinks from drudging forever. But why should I want to live always ? What good would it be ? Whom could I love when Zulficar will himself die ? No, I must get rid of the charm. But I can't give it to my husband. He would ask questions. I shall give it to Ganpat. He is sure to come tomorrow when the Rajah goes to the shikar.” She ran outside forgetting entirely about the dinner, which was quite spoiled when she returned.

Ganpat was a small, stout man, decidedly ugly.

“ How is it you look so sullen and queer ? Has Krishna been beating you lately ?” he asked Ainee on the morrow when she waited for him, the talisman hidden in her veil.

“ Do I look sullen ?”

"Of course you do ! You have not even greeted me !" He laughed stupidly.

The woman put her arms round his neck, and kissed him mechanically.

"Well, what is it ?" he persisted.

"Krishna flogged me yesterday till I was nearly dead ! He tied me to a tree in the garden and beat me."

"Why ?" Ganpat demanded.

"Just because I was a bit careless with the dinner which was burnt. "

"And why were you careless ?"

"I was thinking about something I want you to accept. "

"Oh, what is it ?"

"A talisman ."

Ainee told him the legend.

"But I don't want to be immortal ! The Rajah ought to—"

He paused. Why not give it to the Rajah and tell him its virtues ? He would be rewarded with a bag of gold.

"Yes Ainee, give me the charm ! Where is it ?" he cried excitedly.

"Here. " The little piece of glass again changed hands.

Ganpat obtained the audience he desired without much difficulty.

“ Rajah Sahib, I have something to give and something to tell you ” he began.

He was told to proceed with his business.

“ May it please my lord, I have come across a strange talisman which is supposed to keep people immortal. ”

“ What ! show it to me ”

The man put the little square charm on a cushion and offered it to the Rajah, whose face darkened.

“ Who gave it to you ”

“ A woman, I sometimes visit ”, Ganpat replied meekly. He began to be rather frightened.

“ Who is she ? ”

“ Krishna’s wife. ”

“ And who is Krishna ? ”

“ The soldier who accompanies you, Rajah Sahib, when you go hunting. It was yesterday I visited her and she gave me the charm. I am not worthy to be immortal, but you are ! Will you accept it ? Could I dare offer it to you ? ”

"How did this woman get the talisman—from whom?" demanded the Rajah.

"That I don't know, my lord. She would not tell me. Wilt thou, oh, protector of the poor, accept it?"

"I will" said the Rajah wearily. "But how could it be roaming about like this?"

He turned to the man, who stood timidly in front of him, his hands folded over his chest, his head thrown down in respect.

"All right, you may go!" Then the Rajah told his prime minister, "See that he is paid well!"

The Rajah, both puzzled and angry at this strange happening, lost no time in going to the zennana.

"Where is the talisman I gave you?" he demanded, bursting in upon Savitree.

"Why, in that casket," replied the Ranee, feigning a calm she was far from feeling.

"Good! Show it to me."

"Why," she exclaimed, her fingers tightening convulsively upon a cushion. "Why?"

"I must see it," he said.

The Ranee took the casket from the table, opened it.

"It is gone," she exclaimed.

"Of course." The Rajah laughed sardonically.

"To whom did you give it?" But she looked at him, her heart beating wildly and then she said:

"It must have been stolen."

"Lies are useless. Your only chance is the truth. Answer. I insist upon it. To whom did you give the charm?"

His hands were about her throat. She tried to ward him off, tried to scream. The relentless pressure about her windpipe increased. Her head rolled drunkenly to one side.

Her light soul fluttered from out the beautiful, passionate, body that had so fittingly encased it.

The Rajah stepped back. As he did so, a sharp pain stabbed him. He looked down. The glass charm which had fallen to the ground had pierced his foot, and the weight of his body had embedded it, fairly into the flesh. As he gazed at the wound, it healed, suddenly, mysteriously.

The most skilful surgeons in India were summoned, but all their efforts were in vain. The mystic power of the talisman rendered the skin of the Rajah impervious to even the sharpest steel. Wherever he went, the charm went with him. He could no longer rid himself of it or of the burden of his immortality.

Wandering through the jungles, or in the reeds by the river, you may meet an old man, grey bearded, wild-eyed, in the garb of a hermit. Once, many, many years ago, he was Rajah of Bhardipur. Now he is accursed, for the Reaper who takes the green corn with the ripe must ever pass him by.

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# **CHARITY.**

**TO MRS. B. M. DALAL.**



## CHARITY.

**A** man sat shivering in a cold and cheerless room, in one of the back streets of Vienna. The small room was furnished with only the greatest necessities—there was a small, wooden bed with a very dirty sheet, a pillow in an aged and yellow case and a blanket, torn in parts. Standing near the one and only window, was a table, which dangled and moved with the slightest movement, because one of its legs was unequal to the other three. On the worn out, wooden surface of the table, was a cup of tea and a dry toast. Near the table was a high backed chair, also old and decrepit like the rest of the furniture. In one of the corners of the room was a small canvas trunk and resting on a wall was a mirror, dirty, old and cracked. This was the entire furniture that the room possessed. The man, who was sitting in that high backed chair,

near to the table, was reading a Viennese daily paper. He was not reading the great news of the world, for at that time the world was about to be frightfully shaken from out of its dreams and peace. The world—or at least the Great Powers of the world were at war. Austria and Germany had marched up to Belgium, playing their horrible havoc; King Albert of Belgium had cast one appealing look to England. England had sent an ultimatum to Germany and that being refused, she had also joined the war. Who knew how long the war would last? Who knew which would be the victorious power? Austria was equally upset like the other contesting Powers. But the foreigners residing in that country suffered most, the confiscation of their properties and wealth and their imprisonment as political prisoners.....

The man who was shivering in that cold, cheerless, room was not reading the news of the latest fight in Belgium. He was reading the advertisements in the column marked, "Situations Vacant"—systematically, one advertisement after another. Most of these advertisements were now for women. Men were very precious. They had joined the Army.

All the young school boys even were turned into soldiers. The work of the men now inevitably fell upon the women. The man in that cold room read on until he came to an advertisement where he stopped:

“Wanted a tutor for the sons of the Baron Von Restagg. Must be a qualified man with a university degree and proficient in the modern languages—French, Italian and Russian. Also good in other subjects. Apply immediately to the Steward of the Baron Von Restagg, Schoßbrunn.” Danillo Metta, the Spanish outcast, thrown poor and hungry, upon a hostile city, sighed of relief. The advertisement would suit him admirably. He knew the languages that were necessitated to teach the sons of the Baron. Also he was good in literature, fortunately the German literature and history, classics and mathematics. Yes, he would undoubtedly do. He smiled to himself when he noticed that English was not included in the modern languages. But of course it would not be, for the Baron was a Nationalist, a Loyalist, and he would boycott everything that was English, now that his country was at war with England.

Danillo Metta, when comparatively young, after completing his university education in Madrid, had arrived at Vienna with his father. His father wished to settle in the city and trade with a firm at Madrid. All went well for some time till his father's partner proved to be a swindler, and Metta, senior, lost all he had. Soon followed his death and so Danillo, a little over twenty, found himself quite alone, fatherless and poor in a foreign city. But he had talents and he was well educated. He was engaged as a correspondence clerk in the foreign department of the Bank Verein. He was good at languages and that was well. There was incessant drudgery for eight hours daily—the same work with the same people in the same building and the same room every day of his life. Once a year he got three weeks holiday but he did not leave the Bank. He stuck to it and got double wages for three weeks. He lived a morbid life in one of the back streets. His room was barely furnished and was always cold and cheerless. He was himself so morose, as he could not be otherwise with his drudgery, living a sunless, hum-drum life. He ate

scantily and wore shabby, old, second hand clothes. But he saved his wages although they were scanty and barely enough to keep him alive. He was working for over five years now in the Bank and he had actually saved fifty kronas which was a little fortune to him. Then followed the outbreak of the war and before he could realise that his capital was in danger and could lay hands on it, the Bank had confiscated it, being the capital of a hostile party, though Spain was so far a neutral power. Misfortune follows misfortune. Metta was dismissed from the Bank Verein with the curt remark that the Bank could no longer keep a foreigner in its service. So he was a begger, hurled at a city that was hostile to him and did not understand him. There was unemployment. He tried hotels for the post of a waiter, shops to be a salesman, richmen to be their footman or even a groom but he was asked for his nationality. He could not change his name and nationality for a passport or a letter of reference was demanded. So he was unemployed, with all his talents and a good education. He starved and shivered in the cold. He ate only once

a day and that also barely enough to keep him alive. And he stood in the streets to sell matches and beg. But he soon relinquished that, for men, mostly all of them in soldiers' uniform, passing, would question him why he had not joined the Army? Was he unfit? He looked healthy enough; they said they had seen worse specimen of health in the Army. Then Danillo had to look down and whisper that he was Spanish. The soldiers jeered at him and said they would have nothing to do with a foreigner and he was left in the cold street, to the gaze of men, with his matches in his hands. He had a little money with him but he sold his clothes and whatever he could lay hands on, for he wanted to last out as much as he could, with unemployment. He sold all his clothes, keeping only one suit and a ramshackle, jaded overcoat, a shapeless trilby and a woollen, aged muffler. But his clothes had been second-hand and so did not fetch good prices. He was always reading in the papers advertisements for situations vacant and answered them in person immediately. But it had been in vain. People turned their backs as soon

as they heard he was not an Austrian. But now it seemed as if chance was offering him a hand and pulling him up from utter despair and starvation. Yes, the Baron's advertisement would suit him. He got up from the chair and rubbed his hands for he was feeling cold. He looked out from the window. It was snowing hard. It had been snowing all the morning and every hour the snow had increased. The skies were thick and black and the city was sunless and all white—a carpet of snow. Should he go immediately to Schoöbrunn? Or should he write? By writing to the Steward he would save the tram-fare. And yet he must see the Steward personally and that immediately as it would carry more weight. He could walk up to Schoöbrunn. It would take at least three hours for the return journey. But the snow; it was impossible to walk in the snow! Yes, he could take a tram. And he must go immediately. He moved to the cracked mirror, which penduled on the wall. He looked at himself in the dirty mirror and he saw that his face was pale and wry, his cheeks sunken. There were dark lines around his eyes and

he looked as if he needed a shave. But he could not afford frequent shaves. No, he must go as he was. He put his hands into his trouser pockets and pulled out a little krone. That little silver coin glinted on the dirty palm of his hand. It was his very last coin and it ought to turn his luck. Yes, it would turn his luck. Surely it was not meant by Fate that he should starve everyday of his life till this War ended. And when would the War end? Why should he suffer for it? But he supposed others, equally innocent, suffered too. Why, it was a War! And War was meant for suffering. Danillo looked wistfully at his last, last coin. If that was spent what else would he sell and raise money on? His bed? Yes, he could sleep on the floor. Or his rickety table and have his tea on the bed or his high backed chair and sit on his canvas box.... . But no, his luck would change. He was confident, even cheerful and smiled at his optimism. Yes, his luck would change. He could keep himself again comfortably, living on the wages of the Baron Von Restagg. They would be liberal.....A knock on his



door disturbed his optimistic reveries and slipping the coin into his pocket, he said:

“Come in.”

A bilious-looking stout, old lady entered. She was decidedly ugly with her short size, ample bosom, and a strong, Jewish nose. She was the land-lady. Danillo fidgeted. So did the woman, who coughed nervously and clearing her throat said:

“Well, Herr Metta! Are you not going out? It is snowing hard to day. OOO! It is so cold in here!”

“I am just going out, Frau Pocker. Just going out.”

“Hump! in the snow too! Is it to answer an advertisement?”

“Just so! an advertisement that will suit me admirably—as a tutor.” “Good luck, Herr Metta.” Frau Pocker insisted on calling Metta a Herr although the others, after learning Danillo’s nationality, sneered at him by calling him a Monsieur.

“Would you like a fire in here?”

“Oh no, thank you!”

Frau Pocker knew well Danillo could not afford a fire but always politely asked him if he would have one?

"You know, Herr Metta, you have not paid me for my lodgings this one month past. It greatly inconveniences me."

"Frau Pocker, be easy. As soon as I get this job, your money shall be paid."

Frau Pocker grunted something, fidgeted about the room, then took his tea cup and went away. Danillo sighed. He always was uncomfortable in the Frau's presence as she taxed him for not paying her rent. But now he was confident. He would get this new job. Before he left his room, he knelt by the side of his bed and sent up a prayer to God. His head sank into both his hands and he buried it deeply into the cold, dirty sheets of his bed.

"O, God! Thou who seest, absolve me from pain! I have suffered deeply. I have known pain. Give me rest from to-day, O thou lord, Thou who seest."

Then he rose to his feet, put on his green, faded overcoat and his shapeless felt hat. Over his neck he spread his muffler for he was

cold, also he had a dirty collar and the scarf would hide its defects. He walked out from the cold room, and out into the snow covered street. As he walked towards the tram stand, he thought of the time when despair at losing his savings was so great that he had contemplated suicide.....but he had not the strength to do it..... ..was it worth his while living ?.....Yes, he would get this new job.....

After waiting for a long time for the Schoöbrunn tram, he got into one, wet with the snow and cold in his thin overcoat. The heavy snow fall was delaying the tram service. He exchanged his last krone. He put his last half krone into his pocket and fingered it nervously from time to time as if to test its safety. That half krone would just take him back to Vienna.....but then he would get the new job.....

He rang the bell at the Baron's hall door, after half an hour. He waited and rang again before a maid servant came.

" Excuse me for keeping you waiting, Herr. The staff is reduced. All the men servants are in the Army. "

"Its all right," said Danilo good naturedly for he had come across these kind words spoken in kind tones after such a long time. "May I see the Steward?"

"Yes. Come this way, Herr." The maid servant took him into the snow covered garden and on to a small, wooden hut, Swiss in its architecture. That was the Steward's office. The maid took him to an ante room.

"Can I take in your card?"

Danilo pretended as if he really possessed such an élite thing as a visiting card. He fumbled in his pockets and looked as if he had forgotten to have a visiting card on his person.

"I haven't one with me now! Get me a paper and pencil." And he wrote on the paper:

Herr Metta.

The maid took the paper into a room and Danilo heard a man's voice say:

"Send him in!"

He saw the Steward, a tall, bearded man, well clothed and overfed, sitting by a roaring fire. Danilo was asked to sit near the fire. The Steward looked at him and asked.

"Is it to answer the advertisement that you have come?"

“Yes, Herr.”

“I am sorry, Herr Metta, but we have already had over half a dozen men, mostly unfit for the Army of course and we have engaged a very brilliant young man as a tutor. He has a weak chest and cannot join the Army. Are you also unfit for the Army?” It was no use lying.

“I am Spanish, Herr, and so am not allowed to enlist.”

“Oh, I see—I see!”

“So you have engaged a man as a tutor already?”

“Yes, Monseieur Metta”—the Steward was also therefore sneering at Danillo, “and even if we had not engaged him, I can tell you that the Baron would not have heard of my taking you in the service for he is a great Loyalist.”

The Steward rose as if to end the interview. Danillo rose too but looking on the ground, as if ashamed to speak, said :

“I—I am poor, Herr. Could you not take me into the service at all?”

“No, I am sorry.”

He moved to the door, opened it and let Danillo pass again into the cruel world—out into the cold, snow ground.

The heart of Danillo was broken. It was finally broken. He had been confident about his new job and he could not get it with all his education. He must starve. Starve and die. He trudged on wearily, heavily, with a broken heart, out of the Baron's gates, out into the morbid world.

Looking down on the white, snow covered ground, walking slowly, with head-bent and terrible forebodings as to the future, Danillo came upon a human mass, clothed scantily, standing in the snow. He was a beggar, an outcast like him, poor, starving, cold and frost-bitten, but Danillo passed him on, fingering his last half krone, gingerly. The beggar did not speak. Danillo turned round and saw that the starving grey-bearded, pale beggar man was looking wistfully at him. He fingered his last coin and as he did so he thought of charity. God is Love and Love is Charity. By giving his last coin to a beggar he would come face to face with God. God would be glad if he were to give his last coin to a beggar who perhaps needed it more than he did. So he turned round and went to the sad, wistful beggar, who was still stan-

ding in the same position, and held out the coin to him. He put the coin on his palm, and said :

"Go, my man, and get something to drink. That will warm you up." The voice of the beggar broke out into a sob, and he said:

"God bless you!"

Danillo turned away and trudged on into the snow. He had parted with his last bit of wealth and now he must walk home—to starvation.

God! how hungry he was!—How thirsty! But he had known hunger and he had known thirst. He walked on till his limbs were cramped with the cold and he found he could walk no more. Faint, hungry, cold, he sank down on to the snow covered ground and darkness fell on him and around him. He lay stretched on the snow, at full length, hungry and cold, and later, he found death and rest in the snow. An outcast, poor, a beggar, not understood by men, who laughed at him, he was understood and loved by Him who made him. Danillo had come face to face with Him for God is Love and Love is Charity.

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**THE ARCHITECT AND  
HIS IDEA.**

**TO DARIUS TALAYARKHAN.**



## THE ARCHITECT AND HIS IDEA.

**T**HE amber flames of the fading sun beat about the house tops and the buildings of a city and the little bundles of fleecy clouds drifted over the sky like white butterflies. The sun was like a great shimmering orange. The cool evening air rested upon the earth like a mist and the birds flew in long stretching strings to their hidden nests.

The buildings of this city, which was wedged in a shapeless triangle, were ugly buildings and built at a time when houses were just dwelling places. Their ugliness and ungainliness were pathetically softened by the straw coloured flames of the setting sun, which etched itself over the walls and beat them into gold ; for the city had an exquisite natural beauty. It had a most wonderful semi-circular bay that impressed people by its strange liveliness ; and high up on the hills there

were the most beautiful gardens, which to the world were known as the Hanging Gardens. All along the semi-circular coast of the bay there were also ugly buildings to be found. In fact the entire city was ugly. People had built their houses in ignorance. They were a prosaic and unartistic population. Only living mattered to them and they built the houses without in the least beautifying them or making them little monuments of art. The people of this city did not have a sense of beauty, neither did they seek for it. To them beauty always looked through a mask.

On this calm evening, while the last beams of the dying sun were playing magic on the house tops of the buildings, one man stood alone on the hill, in a part of the Hanging Gardens, and keenly watched the ugliness of the city. He was strangely absorbed by the beauty circled ugliness of this city—like a leper clad in purple. He was passionately absorbed and he quivered with the pain of his thoughts. He stood thus motionless and immobile, and he thought of what God had created and Man had committed. And he gazed at the ungainly housetops and the stilted,

shapeless architecture of the buildings; at the meagre gardens and the crooked lanes that blinked far away, near the coast, and loomed like unshapely giants, silhouetted against the lapis lazuli blue of a Persian sky.

And as he gazed, the architect was seized with an idea and an awful ambition entered within his heart. If the population were prosaic and did not know what beauty was, he would be the one person to show it to them. He would open their eyes. He would bring them to their knees when they had understood the subtle and secret mysteries of the great goddess. He would break every single building in the city and he would build an entirely new city with the most beautiful buildings. He would be the immortal god, the great creator of this now ungainly city. And the people? Why, the prince would have to decide that question.

So the architect in the madness of his ambition went to the prince. The prince had heard of this great foreign creator of buildings and eagerly granted him the audience. And when the court heard what he had to say,

they were all amazed and dumb-founded at the madness of his idea.

"Let me break the entire city," he said and from these ungainly masses I shall remould it, bit by bit, into a thing, exquisite and wondrous. I will transform the whole city, like a magician, into a gorgeous theatre of beauty. Men will come from all the corners of the world and your name will be immortal, for they will speak of the city as having been transformed in the enlightenment of your reign. And I shall be immortal too for I shall have created it."

And it happened that the prince, who was young and impetuous and equally impulsive, was seized with the fever of ambition. The vizier and the durbaris endeavoured to prevent the idea of the architect from being carried out. The vizier was a calculating, prosaic man, imbibed with economic questions. He was also an authority on statistics.

And so he put forward the question of housing the poor. The durbaris, equally adverse to the rebuilding of the city, seconded the question.

"The poor?" questioned the architect, "the poor? why! they will also dwell in palaces.

**My buildings will all be palaces and the rich and the poor will dwell together."**

**"But how can they dwell together?"**

**"Because my palaces will be cheap."**

**"But they will be seized with ideas and notions,"** said the vizier, who himself had never been guilty of such mental atrocities.

**"They would turn Bolsheviks,"** said the courtiers, thinking of their riches.

**"Yes, and Atheists,"** quavered the priests, thinking of their benefices.

But the architect and the prince were seized with the fever of ambition.

**"Think of the beauty of the city! Think of its immortality!"** they both cried. And the architect looked at the prince and the prince looked at the architect. And at last, in spite of strong opposition, the prince obtained the votes of the Senate and he passed a law that the city should be destructed and rebuilt. His people thought he was a mad man and they considered the architect to be a slave of the evil powers.

So the soldiers of the prince had to go forth into the city with spears and drive the citizens out into the open road. The people could not

flee from the city with their belongings so they lived in the chill of the night and in the heat of the day and the air was rent with their lamentations and curses. The old died of old age and the young died of the palsy. And gradually the entire city was upset and all the buildings were destructed for the sake of a prince's ambition and an artist's dream. And every one thought it was the plague for men were dying in innumerable numbers. But the prince and the architect watched its progress. Stone upon stone was laid and gradually building after building arose. Slowly, yet steadily, the architect was giving birth to his great idea and the prince was glad at heart for he rejoiced at the idea of the immortality his name would have. And the architect rejoiced in his heart for he had triumphed.

And people, many people, died in the open roads and they cursed the prince and the architect for their madness.

And after many, many weary years the new city was built and verily it was turned into a theatre of beauty. People from all the corners of the world heard of the foreign architect and they hailed him as a god, a creator of greatness.

And the prince also was immortal and he rejoiced for he was the prince of the land of poetry and perfection, this land of mist and dreams and frail loveliness. And the eyes of the population were opened as wolves that are led to a feast.

But the architect was only an artist and the prince was merely a selfish man. So they both had not calculated the future. Now after the entire transformation of the old city into a new one, they found that the poor could not live in those palaces and they could not live in hovels, for there were none.

And the rich, who were greedy, fought amongst themselves for the possession of the most beautiful building. But the architect was such a great artist that all his buildings were equally beautiful and so the rich could not judge. And the Elders fought amongst the Elders in the Senate, for their buildings and the priests fought amongst the priests for their temples and men fought amongst men and they killed each other for the most beautiful building. Though the prince and the architect were both immortalised, they were very heavy at heart for they were sick

at the avarice of men. And the architect hated himself for he was the creator of wickedness and murder and death as he was a creator of beauty and greatness. But those who were alive, be they rich or poor, fled from the kingdom of poetry and beauty, mist and dreams and from the city of palaces. The city was deserted and the palaces were empty and the land lay desolate by the blue sea. Men praised the architect for the greatness of his triumph but they forgot God and they forgot the beauty that he had created—the Bay of that City and the Hanging Gardens thus sunk into oblivion and the city was empty and it was known ever after as the city of silence and desolation.

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**THE DREAM OF  
ALNASCHAR.**

**TO MISS ELLA KISPALVI.**

## THE DREAM OF ALNASCHAR.

**A**LNASCHAR, the Israelite merchant, reputed to be the richest man of ancient Athens, gave a mighty feast at his palace. Over the marble portals of the triclinium, hung, horizontally, garlands of flowers and strings of roses. The floor of the triclinium was a mass of multi-coloured mosaics and it was said that a Mogul artist from India had come to Athens to design it. At intervals, there were immense pillars of a dark brown Egyptian stone, and by the side of these carved pillars were set iron stands on which were brazen bowls, from which came the dreamy grey smoke of the intoxicating incense and rich perfumes, specially brought from Araby. On the mosaiced floor were scattered innumerable flower petals, which fell about in the most lovely ruins, kicked from side to side by the feet of the Athenians.

The triclinium was filled with people—old men and young men and lovely women known for their debaucheries. They reclined on the low cushioned seats and gazed with admiration at Alnaschar's feast. The Israelite merchant was the originator of many strange debaucheries and his feasts were the envy of all the rich Athenians. In the centre of the triclinium sat the host, an old man with a clean shaven yellow face and a closely cropped head over which was set a crown of white roses. His white toga was richly perfumed and filled those, who sat on either side of him, with its heaviness. On his one side reclined a woman, young and of many lovely charms. Her shoulders and arms were white and Alnaschar gazed intently at her very fair face. Every now and then he passed his old shrunken arms round the woman's waist, and then a horrible leer appeared on his pink lips. He gave her wine to drink out of a big silver goblet, the rim of which was set in little round emeralds.

The slaves, the Grecians, dressed in loose white robes and the Numidians, half naked,

ran about the room silently in their bare feet and filled the goblets of the guests with the wine of Thrace and the arak brought from Arabia. Huge snow flakes were found floating in the fiery liquids which played magic around the company, for as the guests drank the wines, they sang songs and laughed and men, be they young or old, crushed the women, who reclined by their sides, in the embraces of love.

At each of the three tables, raised on little carved wooden boxes, rested crystal bowls of the most delicate and lovely designs. In the huge crystal bowls there were hundreds of live fishes, lovely coloured fishes. The guests according to their fastidious tastes, chose the size and the kind and the colour of the fish.

The slaves entered the triclinium silently and softly, treading the rose petal ground, bearing in their hands brazen dishes in which reposed peacocks in all the variegated magical glory of their million colours. The dead bodies of the peacocks were stuffed with many fruits, crystallized with sugar and honey. The guests plucked the beautiful feathers of the peacocks, purple and blue and grey and snow

white peacocks, while the colours of their feathers dazzled the eyes of the feasters.

In the centre of the room there were lovely Grecian maidens, young virgins, who danced to the clash of the cymbals, the quiver of the lutes, the notes of the harps and the thin sounds of the vina played by the Indians. Their slim, supple, white bodies intoxicated the men like wine, who gazed at them. In the hands of the dancing virgins there were rose petals and lotus petals and as they danced, they threw them where ever their fancy guided them. The Numidian slaves stood at the four corners of the room with silver sprays and threw the rose water in a jet.

In baskets were set about the most delicious sweets—Grecian sweets and sweets from the lands of the East and in little silver plates were set heaps of crystallized flowers.

And at the portals of this palace of riches and debaucheries and feastings, there came a poor lame man in rags, and he knocked at the gates of Alnaschar. The slaves were moved with pity for the man as he could easily have been fed, but Alnaschar, who saw

the lame man in rags, ordered the slaves to drive away the beggar with blows. As the feast proceeded, the feasters were more than ever intoxicated. They could yet confusedly hear the laughter and the songs of the company and they could hear the sounds of music and they could see in a misty blur the lovely white swaying forms. There were some Athenians, who carried away by the licentiousness of the wine and the hour, left the low cushioned chairs, and staggered, dead drunk and mad, towards the dancing girls.

When all the snow-cooled Thracian wine and the arak from Araby was drunk—when no more could possibly be consumed by the feasters, then they fell on their couches in sleep.

Then the room became quieter. The feasters were sleeping off their wine. The music stopped, the dancing girls left the triclinium, and the slaves knowing that nobody was looking on, finished the rest of the food and

the wine. And as Alnaschar, the Israelite, slept, he dreamt a dream.

He saw in his dream, a man, clad all in black, his face masked, approaching him. The man walked without making a noise—he simply glided. The appearance of this man terrified the soul of Alnaschar, and in his sleep he screamed, “Begone, evil spirit!” he said, “begone or I shall call my slaves,” and Alnaschar called unto his slaves but they came not.

The black figure approached nearer and the soul of Alnaschar was cold and dumb with fear. “Who art thou? and what dost thou want of me?”

And the masked figure spake.

“I am a teacher of wisdom. I warn men such as thee of their approaching perdition. And thou, Alnaschar, shall learn wisdom from me!” and as the figure spake, he held in his hand a beauteous, rotund crystal, which he gave to the terrified merchant.

"See!" said he, "see closely, closely into this crystal and thou shalt learn wisdom."

Alnaschar held it in his hands and gazed into the crystal. The black figure of the stranger, the teacher of wisdom, left him.

Alnaschar saw himself, in his old age, in rags. He was lame in one leg and he moved from house to house, in pitiable dirty tatters. He was cold at night and he burnt with the glare of the sun by day. He was often very hungry and oftener thirsty. As he gazed at the shops of the foodstuffs, he wistfully stood in front of the windows. He moved in the company of beggars. He was beaten with blows from the houses of the rich but the poor who passed him in the streets, gave him their mites. And he slept in the streets, famished and cold. And when Alnaschar looked at his lame leg and his body, he found the most awful patches on them and he hated his own self. It was leprosy—and when men passed him, they cried: "Unclean !—unclean !—a leper !"



And Alnaschar, in that awful state, hated his life and was weary of his existence and cried : " Oh, gods ! grant me death ! " and he heard the voice of the stranger, the teacher of wisdom, speak to him, and he said,

" Alnaschar, thou art a leper and lame and a beggar. Feel the agony that many others feel. When thou beatest a begger, what must he feel ? Now thou hast learnt pain and thou art cold and hungry. "

And then Alnaschar saw that somebody put a robe of purple on his body and hid his rags and leprosy and on his head was put a crown of gold, and the people hailed him as a king. They put him in a palanquin and bore him away and the voice of the stranger spake :

" Learn, Alnaschar, the way of life, the philosophy of the living. Thou art a begger and a leper but thine uncleanness is hidden from the sight of men, and thy crown of gold has dazed the living, and they have cried that thou art a king. "

Then Alnaschar saw in his dream that he was half naked and that his feeble, old body was doing the heavy labours of a common

slave. He lived with the other slaves and he worked with them and he saw that they were tired and hungry and aged with work. The slaves carried large boulders up to a hill, but every time that Alnachar carried his boulders, they slipped from off his back. He could not carry them safely up the hill and the stern, stolid, custodian of the slaves, whipped his feeble back, till it bled.

And the voice of the stranger spoke: "Alnaschar, now thou art a slave like thine own slaves. Thou art tired and cold and hungry like thine own slaves. Thou hast felt pain that they feel and thou hast begged for mercy as they have begged. Learn how much pain thou givest to thine own slaves."

And Alnaschar saw himself in his dream as he was in life—he saw himself in perfumed togas and riches and the stranger, the teacher of wisdom, held him by the hand and took him through caverns and narrow paths until he came to a strange land. The stranger knocked at a gate of gold on which were set all the precious stones.

"Alnaschar, the Israelite merchant of Athens, knocks for admittance!"

A vague, white, filmy figure came at the doors of gold. Alnaschar could not see the face of the figure and he could not see the halo that shone around his head.

"Alnaschar," spake the white figure, "Art thou not ashamed to knock at the gates of Heaven? Begone, thou, evil one! begone to thine own land. We do not admit such as thee, here."

And Alnaschar fell on his knees and begged for mercy:

"Mercy me! mercy me!" he sobbed, "Angel of God, forgive my sins."

"What hast thou done in life, Alnaschar? Thou hast lived with the rich in riches. Thou hast fed the rich and thou hast beaten the poor. Thou hast passed thy life with courtesans in wickedness. Thou hast robbed the people and built for thyself a palace. Thou hast seen evil and lived in sin. How canst thou beg for mercy and forgiveness? Thou art unclean, Alnaschar, so begone to thy land of evil."

And Alnaschar saw in his dreams once again the stranger, the teacher of wisdom, clad in black, and masked. He took the cry-

stal away from the hands of the trembling merchant and spake:

“ Learn Alnaschar, the lesson of thy life. Thou wilt not obtain mercy from the Holy One for thou art unclean and wicked. ”

And Alnaschar awoke and saw himself lying beside the fair figure of the courtesan and he saw the others, still sleeping off their wine—his guests lying in the disordered triclinium in the embraces of love.....

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# **THE SWAN SONG.**

**TO NAROTTAM MORARJI, ESQ.,  
WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARDS.**

## THE SWAN SONG.

**I**T was a sultry day. The hot air was heavy. Overhead, the clouds were thick and black and they clung together. The sky looked like a woman in mourning. It was an awful day. The Promenade at Cannes was deserted. There were only a few stragglers, stray promenaders, who had braved the bad weather. There was not a streak of sunlight. All was black and ominous. A small motor boat was steaming away towards the little island of Saint Honaré. It had left Cannes a long way behind and it rose and fell like a tremulous cradle, swayed by the tempest of the waves. The only occupant of the motor boat was driving it steadily onwards. He was dressed in a brown sealskin coat and a cap of the oil cloth which covered the greater part of his sharp, clear cut features.

Suddenly there was a frightful crack in the heavens above and it seemed as if they were

splitting into two. The earth vibrated, there were fiery streaks of lightning and the rumbling echoed. The flashes of lightning increased and the man in the motor boat instinctively looked up, slightly shivered but hastened the pace of the vessel towards Saint Honaré's island and then it suddenly poured with rain. The man in the motor boat was drenched. He looked round to see whether he was all alone in this part of the sea. There were no other vessels. He could make out a few in a misty blur right away towards Cannes.

The little motor boat sped safely away to Saint Honaré's island and the man carefully anchored it by the well-laid out wharf. Then he left the vessel and with a last, lingering look towards it, walked onwards. The turrets of two white houses could be distinctly seen. There were a few fishing huts, by the wharf, tawdry and rickety. The doors of these huts were closed, the windows carefully fastened against the storm. The man knew that one of these white houses, on the left, was the monastery, famed for its Gothic architecture, its old world building

the beautiful extensive garden and the grotto of rocks, overlooking the other side of the sea. About two hundred yards away from the monastery was a small French château. The man took shelter against the rain under a tall, overhanging cypress to consider whether he should seek refuge in the monastery or whether he should knock at the tall, iron gates of the château. It would be depressing to dwell amongst the long robed monks even for a few hours, though it would be rather novel. If he knocked for admittance to the château, he would be able to solve a mystery. Every time he had visited the island he had wished to know who occupied the château but the local people themselves could not solve the mystery for they did not know who dwelt in the château. Some said it was a hospital. But no sick persons were admitted. Others conjectured that it was a lunatic asylum but if people went mad in the island, they were not taken into the château. The man in the sealskin coat looked wistfully at the French château. It was tall, majestic, prepossessing. It's colour was ochre. It was rectangular and its facade was semi-circular, enclosed by a



tall iron gate. High up on the château, nearly touching the roof were frescos, beautifully executed, but aged and worn out like the building itself. There were also statues representing the Muses—Art, Literature, and Music. On the gate was a crest, in solid bronze. There were two yellow peacocks, facing each other, their long, tapering plumes gracefully fell and touched the one of the other. Underneath was written in Italian : It is Sweet to do Nothing in Life. The man who stood underneath the cypress, warding off the rain, took out a watch from his pocket and saw that it was a little past five. Then he made up his mind finally to knock at the château and beg for shelter against the rain. Here was a fine chance for him to solve the mystery of the château. He left the monastery and the monks behind and walked on ahead. He rang at the gates and waited to be admitted inside by a buxom French woman, who was the portress. He begged for admittance and shelter against the bad weather. The woman asked him to see Madame about it. She led him through the marbled court-yard and by the front garden.

On the sward, shaded by drooping cypresses, was a Temple of Love, all wrought out of alabaster and carara. The portress escorted the man up a flight of white stone steps. The little door was also of iron and here again was the crest of the two peacocks and the motto that it was sweet to do nothing in life. On each side of the walls, leading from the stone steps to the hall, were six candelabra fixed into the stone walls. The light was electric and it was already lit, throwing into the hall a soft shadow. There was an immense sofa and several chairs, all white and a pale jade. On each side of the sofa were Japanese lions of ebony. The man took off his sealskin overcoat and the oil cloth cap and immediately there was a big pool of water by the stone steps. He looked guiltily at the pool of water and then at the portress.

" I am so sorry ".....he said.

" It is all right, Monsieur. "

From the hall there wound and rewound a snake like staircase. The broad and circular steps were made of carara and the railings of black and gold were of iron and bronze. As you went up the stairs, on the walls there

were painted scenes of Venice in oils. A woman was coming down the steps, looking intently at the man who was standing in the hall, by the Japanese lions, his drenched coat and cap in hand. The man was tall, muscular, well built. He stood erect and his well formed chest protruded. His thin hair of gold was now thick and matted. He looked keenly with his steady blue eyes at the woman who was descending the marble stairs. His lips were parted. The woman was dressed in a silken frock of pure white. She was small. Her ivory complexion blended with the dark hazel of her eyes and the passionate ruby of her lips. Her dark brown hair was combed down on her small crown. Her eyes were slightly stretched and she looked like a Burmese beauty from a distance. The portress looked from her mistress to the stranger and was about to speak but the stranger himself broke the silence.

“Madame, I beg you to give me shelter against the rain.”

The woman looked at the man. By now she had left the stairs and was standing very near to the man.

"Certainly, Monsieur," she replied in French for the man had talked to her in that language. But she asked him, "are you English?"

"Yes. Do you speak English?"

The woman laughed. Her clear laughter rippled like the sound of a brook.

"Certainly, for we are English." This time she spoke in English. The man laughed too.

Now they talked in English.

"Oh, I am so sorry! I thought you were French. I am Cecil Sleater, son of Lord Crewhurst. We are holidaying at Cannes. I very foolishly attempted to come over here in a motor boat all alone."

"Oh, yes!" said the woman but she did not give out her name in return for knowing that of her guest. "You must stay the night with us here. You cannot now return to Cannes and the rain won't stop for quite long, I think. We seldom have visitors but we will make you comfortable."

"Thank you very much!" said the Hon. Cecil Sleater, "I am sure that you are more than kind."

But the woman without paying any heed to his remark, turned to the portress, who was still standing by:

"Julie, go and tell Marie to prepare the guest room for Monsieur."

The portress retired. The woman was alone with the guest.

"Sit down—wont you?" she said leading her guest towards a chair. "Bad weather! So unusual for November!" she said, "are you going to make a long stay at Cannes? I prefer Nice to Cannes. Cannes is too congested."

And so they conversed until Julie came back to say that the femme had prepared the room for Monsieur. The lady of the château arose.

"I do hope that you are not very wet, Mr. Sleater! I could lend you my husband's clothes but he is very much shorter than you are and so they will not fit you. But I will tell Marie to light a fire in your room at once so that you can get dry and be comfortable by the time we dine. We will dine at seven." They were now on the marble stairs. She was ascending them slowly, he following her,

looking at her small, slight figure, drinking in her exotic beauty. She stopped suddenly and turned round to him so quickly that he blushed for he was watching her.

"I am sorry my husband cannot have the pleasure of entertaining you. He is ill."

"I am so sorry! Please do not disturb him and please do not let me disturb you also."

"Oh, its quite all right—quite all right, Mr. Sleater." Then she stopped by a door, turned the white knob and entered the room.

"This is the guest's room. I do hope you will be comfortable," she said looking smilingly at the Hon. Cecil.

"Of course I shall be comfortable! This is more comfortable than the hotel bedroom."

"I will make Marie light the fire at once. Dinner at seven."

"Thank you very, very much really!".....

Later on, after they had dined a select little French dinner and had been waited on by only one prim looking, aged French woman, the lady of the château and the Hon. Cecil were in a small salon. The furniture was strictly French of the period of Louis

Quinze. The several chairs and the couple of stools together with the only sofa were a pale white – gold. The tapestry was of a pale pink satin, the colour of the window and door curtains. The sofa, placed in the middle of a wall, faced a Bechstein grand piano, painted white. The chairs were arranged tastefully in the room at regular intervals. Two stools were near the Bechstein, between a white table with a glass top which covered an exquisite piece of Brussels lace. There were no pictures in the room, save a large sized photograph, which was placed on the piano, framed in a solid silver frame. A flower vase of marble was turned into an electric lamp and the palpitating bulb emitted a soft light, subdued by a tassellated lampshade of pale pink. Cecil Sleater went towards the photograph, for it was the only one in the room. It was the picture of a man, extremely handsome. The man's hair was combed up from his broad forehead and there was a wistful smile on his lips.

"That is my husband," said the lady who was watching him.

Cecil Sleater turned away from the piano and smiled at the lady:

"I see that you have been in the East from all the trophies you have put in the hall and the dining room."

"Oh, yes, we have many Eastern things. We were a great many years in the tropics, you know! My husband was taken ill in Burma and he has never been able to be cured of the illness."

She did not mention the illness in particular and since she wanted to keep it a secret from her guest, Cecil Sleater did not ask her any questions regarding it. They sat down and talked. He was in plus-fours, since that was how he had left Cannes. She was in a low necked evening dress of black silk, thickly inlaid with purple and silver spangles and with a long train of black lace. She looked so beautiful in her bare white arms. Her hair, scrupulously done, covered a greater part of her low forehead and her ears and her brown coils fell at the nape of her neck, where a big red rose was fastened. She was exotic, seductive. There was a wondrous perfume about her which wafted towards Cecil Sleater. It was thick, heavy, Eastern. It was distinct in the room every time



she brought out her hand-kerchief, from a small silken bag.

“Your perfume is wonderful. Is it also Eastern?”

“It is. I got some from India. These perfumes last you a long time. A drop on the handkerchief is sufficient. You like it?” And she gave him a small yellow silken handkerchief and he saw that in one corner a letter P. was embroidered in Gothic lettering. He took the handkerchief and breathed in the nectar.

“What is it?”

“The attur of the keoras. They are the most passionately perfumed flowers I have come across in India.”

After some time, Cecil Sleater moved towards the Bechstein and lifted the lid mechanically. He moved his well manicured, tapering fingers through the keys and asked the lady :

“Do you play?”

“Yes,” she said, “do you?”

“No, I don’t! But I am passionately fond of music and it is one of the few things I care to live for. Please, will you not play for me?”

Without much ado, the lady left the sofa where she was sitting. She took the lace train of her dress in one of her hands and walked towards the piano. Then she sat on the small stool, the folds of her dress falling in lovely droops about her. She looked so beautiful, so exotic under the shaded light. She gazed at Cecil Sleater and said, "You go and sit there," pointing towards the sofa, and then her hands trailed on the keyboard.

Cecil Sleater looked at this beautiful creature as she sat a little away from him. Her face was turned away and she was looking intently at her husband's photograph while she was playing. Her touch on the piano was soft and light. Her fingers just touched the keys and fluttered like magic butterflies. She had the touch of a true artist, a great pianist. She began to play Saint-Saën's Swan Song. The first few fantastic chords floated into the room and they played havoc on the senses of Cecil Sleater. How beautiful was the Swan Song! What fantasy, magic, loveliness was therein! It was so dreamy, wistful, wondrous. Cecil Sleater listened to it like one in a dream. His eyes

were closed, his head drooped on his chest and he held his breath, as if his mere breathing would disturb the melody in the room and enchant away the exquisite effect. The lady executed the Swan Song beautifully. It was some time after Cecil Sleater spoke to her and then they were looking at each other. He had arisen and was going forwards, to the piano. His face was aglow with pleasure. His expression was new. There was something that was not there before he had heard the Swan Song.

"Oh, please, please, play it again! It was glorious!"

"I am glad you liked it. It is one of my favourites."

"Where did you study music? How wonderfully you play!"

"Chiefly at the Paris Conservatoire but also with different masters."

Then she began to play the Swan Song again and once more Cecil Sleater was on the sofa, listening to it, drinking in the beauty of every note and chord that touched his ears like bells. Thoughts, varied and fantastic floated through his head like some gushing,

frenzied typhoon. But the lady did not quite finish the composition. She trailed off and then discontinued playing before reaching the few chords which should have brought the end. She arose and came towards her guest, the handkerchief of the keora perfume in her hands.

“I can play no more ”.....

Cecil Sleater was a heavy sleeper but a little after midnight he was suddenly awakened from his sleep. First he lay on his back on the bed, absently thinking of all that had happened during the day but specially of the beautiful lady who had entertained him and the lovely Swan Song of Saint-Saën. The storm was still raging fiercely. Then he gradually detected a peculiar, pungent and repulsive smell in his room. The smell was distinct and to see from where it came, he got up and sat on the bed, looking about him in his room. He became aware of the presence of somebody who was standing near the door and watching him. It could not be his imagination. It was not an hallucination. It was a fact. There, by the doorway, stood a small sized man. His sharp, prominent features

were distorted and Cecil Sleater could easily make him out by the candle light. He was repulsive, for purplish patches were on the greater part of his face and his hands. He looked ghoulish in his loose, white night-shirt and in his right hand he clutched at a curved Eastern sabre. He was frightful. Cecil Sleater was once in his life frightened. He was very frightened and did not know what to do in order to drive away this frightful man. Ought he to shout or just threaten him so that he would leave the room? But the man was armed while Cecil Sleater was not. He ought to have locked the room. The man looked at the frightened expression of terror on Cecil Sleater's face and then gave out a terrible laugh that rang clear in the darkness of the silent night. He was enjoying the other's fright. Then he suddenly turned on his heels and shutting the door deliberately and noisily, he left the room. Cecil Sleater was shaking with fright, his entire body palpitating with terror. His forehead was wet with perspiration. He left the bed, walked towards the door, and carefully locked it. Almost immediately

he heard the door of another room being locked, as if from the outside.....

It was morning now. It was a still, quiet day. The sun was shining brightly. The skies were a deep turquoise blue. Not a leaf on a tree trembled. All was peaceful. The storm of the yesterday had passed and now all was rest.

Cecil Sleater found his hostess in the dining room. They were breakfasting. Only Marie waited on them. After the greetings, while breakfast prolonged, Cecil Sleater turned to his hostess :

“ You have not yet told me your name. You know mine and I should like to know yours. ”

“ Oh, names!—names ! What are they after all ? You will not forget me if I do not tell you who I am ? No, you will think the more of me without knowing my name. This has been a wonderful moment for you and me and as life is made of lingering moments, ours will linger—did you have a quiet night ? ”

“ Very nice—thanks. ”

The lady looked at Cecil Sleater as if she did not believe what he told her. But he was thinking of her—why did she not tell him her name ?

“ Now why are you telling me that which is not a truth,” she suddenly asked her guest, “ We will not meet again in all probability, so why tell an untruth ? You were disturbed last night by my husband, were you not ? ”

“ Your husband ? ”

“ Yes. He is a leper and now his mind is not quite normal. I would never have told you all this, but since you saw him last night in your room, you might as well know every thing. We were a great deal in the tropics, both for pleasure and business. My husband was a doctor. At Rangoon he infected leprosy while treating a patient. Since then he has never been able to get cured. As you perhaps know, from his photograph, he was a handsome man and then to get this awful disease has been terrible! He is so sensitive and people think him to be an unclean person and he is an untouchable under their eyes. All lepers are unclean and untouchable. We are wise and

so we have buried ourselves alive here—my husband and myself. My husband hardly ever even leaves his room and I very seldom go out of the house. The maid and the portress are the only servants we have. My husband is not of a normal mind now. He is very jealous and gets wild as soon as he finds out I have been talking to another man. Last night he came to murder you. He must have got hold of the sabre from one of the rooms. I found out later that he had left his room. I heard his terrible laughter and then locked him in his room.”

Cecil Sleater was astounded at this confession. He gazed steadily at his hostess. Could this beautiful woman be staying here to take care of a leper and a lunatic? He got up from the table and went towards the woman. They were alone in the room. He held her hand firmly in his and spoke breathlessly.

“My God! A woman as beautiful as yourself to bury herself alive to take care of a leper? I hardly know you but you mean so much to me. I do not even know your name but I



know that it is a sin that one who is so beautiful as you should be here—with a leper. Come with me, come with me and I will take you away with me. I swear I will make you happy. You will not know an unhappy day."

The lady rose from the table, pale and trembling. She looked up at Cecil Sleater like one terribly frightened.

"What are you saying? Are you aware what your words mean to me? My husband is more to me than all the world put together. Go—go as you came and do not pollute my house with sin. Never see me again and never come here! Go, in God's name, go without sinning!"

Aud so he left her. She bid him good bye in the hall. She did not give him her hand, although he held out his. They both bowed and he went away. The portress shut the gate after him. He walked onwards to where he had left his motor boat the previous day. Suddenly he stopped on the road. He heard

the strains of the piano floating towards him from the château. It was the Swan Song. He heard a few bars, dreamy, lovely, and they touched his ears like magic bells. Then he put both his hands to his ears and ran towards the wharf like an animal that is chased.

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# **MARRIAGE.**

**TO CAPT. FELIX MITTERHUSEN.**

## MARRIAGE.

**I**T was a Dinner and Dance at the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay. The little orchestra of Oddeninno was playing, "Why did I kiss that girl?" to which melody the revellers were echoing "O, *Why*, O, *Why*, O, *Why*" The spacious dining room echoed with drunken and ribald cries. On the parquet floor the feet of the dancers played tricks to the rhythm of the music. Paper streamers, gaily coloured, floated in the air like tinted birds; confetti, shimmering and pale white, was thrown by the dancers, who held it agalore in their hands; it glowed under the passionate electric lights like little milk white butterflies; the conflagration of colours of the paper caps was like the rich passion-tints of wondrous fire flies; penny whistles were blown to the accompaniment of the Dance Jazz and balloons, variegated and

gaudily coloured, rose and flew in the room like the fairy lamps of Aladdin. It was wonderful—this blending of the East and West, this frivolity enjoyed both by the sedate and calm, blue-eyed Englishman together with the dark skinned passion-eyed Indian—Parsis danced and the Hindus and Mahomedans with Eurasian ladies, painted and deeply powdered, of doubtful reputations and still more doubtful extractions.....

At a little table in the dining room sat two men, an Englishman and an Indian, sipping coffee and liqueurs and smoking cigars. The Indian looked on at the scene of gaiety with ennui and something akin to despair. He seemed as if he had had enough of this dancing. He looked at the dancing couples with amusement, bowed to them when they met his gaze and gave little spicy anecdotes about them to his fair haired companion.

"I really do not know what is the matter with you to day, my dear boy," said the Englishman but the Indian youth only smiled by way of an answer.

"I suppose nothing."

"But there is something wrong with you. You are not yourself—in fact lately you have been glum. Has some charmer charmed you to the extent of depression verging to melancholia or lunacy?"

The Indian did not reply but looked steadfastly at his friend, seated in front of him.

"Now come!" said Sir Richard Lyndhurst, for it was nobody but that great explorer who had come to pay a visit to India, "now come, my dear boy! Shake off your untimely depression and dance with the Hon. Betty," and here he slightly pointed towards a little table where three people were seated, two ladies, one middle aged in a big black velvet picture hat, the other a young girl, still in her teens, bobbed haired, pale and languid. The old man who was in the middle of the ladies, contentedly smoked his pipe. He had bold features, a pale yellow skin and a thin streak of white grizzly hair on his bald head. Sir Richard was smiling at them and exchanging glances of mutual recognition with the ladies and the gentleman.

"That is Lord and Lady Davenport, my boy, and the young girl is the Hon. Betty, their

only child, who has fallen rapturously in love with a Babu attaché to the Governor at Calcutta and also was greatly enamoured of a Madrasee politician whom she met at the Madras Government House. Her love affairs, though very tame and simple, created great scandal and the old folks had to clear away from Calcutta and also hasten post haste from Madras. They are here now and return to England, by tomorrow's Mail, safe and sound with Betty. Now come and dance with her and let her fall in love with you so that she can have a trio of lovers, a Babu, a Madrasee and now a Parsi!"

The Indian laughed. The dancing had ceased and the dinner tables were filled again. The dancers took hasty snatches of their food before another dance. But they had not to wait for long for another dance for the chef d' orchestre of Oddeninno once more stood to play, "O, Darling do say yes, do say yes." This dance rag time greatly agitated the Parsi young man. He seemed to be unconscious of the revelry that surrounded him. He looked absent-mindedly into his empty coffee cup and watched the vague grey smoke which arose timidly from his fragrant cigar. Sir Richard Lyndhurst vainly remonstrated

with his friend to buck up and dance but the Parsi paid no heed to his ruddy, fair haired companion. Sir Richard shook him by the hand and cried in the noise of the Jazz:

"My dear boy! What on earth has come over you? You need a holiday!"

"Let us talk—I am dying to have a confidential talk. I am choked up with what I have to tell you until I can be choked no more!"

"A talk and a few confidences will do you good, my boy!" cried Sir Richard, "but how can one be heard in this Babel? Come out on the verandah."

They arose and gradually made their way through the closely packed tables on to the verandah. They went to a corner, deserted and desolate and stood leaning on to the plastered railings. The Englishman was silent, waiting for his friend to begin his confidences, but the Indian wistfully gazed on at the Apollo Bunder at his feet, agalore in electric lights but desolate in its splendour. The Gateway of India loomed not far away, silhouetted and clear cut in the shadowless, calm, pale blue Eastern night. The moon was high and shone with a powerful lustre from the cloudless



skies, which spread overhead like a beautiful shawl of deep lapis lazuli. The golden rotund electric bulbs from the Gateway cast a yellow shadow on the agate waters and trembled with the white mobile diamonds cast by the crescent moon. It was so beautiful, this night of beauty, love and longing this night in the East which filled your soul with ethereal thoughts, mingled with its calm spirit.....

"What memories this tune holds for me!" said the Indian as the strains from the rag time of "O, Darling do say yes," floated out.

The Englishman looked on his friend, expectant of confidences to begin.

"I hope I shall be able to talk to you here. It is certainly quieter," said the Indian as he gazed at the lighted Bunder at his feet and saw a few phantom-like, strange stragglers loafing on the broad pavements.

"You will be able to talk here. We are quiet and undisturbed," said Sir Richard, flicking the thick grey mass of ash from his well nigh finished cigar.

The Indian youth began:

"It was like this—I met her at my cousin's. On a public holiday they were having a little

Dance to the gramophone and she was amongst the party. From the very first I was drawn towards her. Indeed no woman has captivated me as she has done. She was magnificently formed. Her little body, supple and lithe, had a million charms; her brown eyes were fathomless; passion lay smouldering in their depths; the scent of her pale gold hair was intoxicating; the touch of her body maddened me. She was a woman to whom a man must inevitably make love; a woman to be kissed and cuddled. She was not beautiful but she was wonderful, dainty and and fascinating.

I danced with her on that day. Our steps went very well together. Our feet played tricks on the parquet floor. We danced to my favourites, "Down on the Farm" and "Oh, Darling do say." From that day I was in love with her and I told myself that she would be my bride.

The next time I went to my cousin's, she was there. In fact whenever I went to dance there, I found her to my great joy. We became friendly. She was still in her teens. Her naiveté and simplicity was glorious. I

asked my cousin all about her. She was the daughter of his client. Her family was obscure, that is we, in our circle, had not heard about them. The girl's father was said to be very disreputable. He had been held up for adultery. Whatever the girl's parents might be and her family, I was determined to marry her. I told my cousin of my inclination and I proposed to her on the Christmas Eve, when we had a little Dance. She looked divine on that day, in a pale pink sari, all be-jewelled with spangles. She had a clinging blouse of silk. Her feet were encased in pale satin shoes. Oblong pieces of fierce sapphires gleamed in her ears. Her forehead was covered with a fringe of her pale gold hair, and her ears were hidden by Persian curls. I will never forget that Christmas Eve. I danced madly with her, dance after dance, without a stop. I held her firmly in my arms, and she clung to me. My lips touched her hair and I drained off her scent. But I was like an idiot and could not bring forth the proposal. It came on my lips and yet I swallowed it. I went white and red by turns and cursed myself for a fool. At length when we were dancing, and

she was clasped tightly in my embrace, I looked into her eyes and asked:

"Do you like me?"

We were alone in the room. The others were sitting out the dance on the varandah. She blushed and a smile flickered on that trembling streak of red, her lips. She answered:

"Yes, I think, you are a pleasant man!"

"Is that all? No, I want you to like me specially, not like you like the others. I want you to think of me in another way. I think of you like that, you are all in all to me."

All this time I whispered these words into her ears, we were dancing. Then I blurted out just as suddenly:

"Do you love me and will you be my wife?"

She did not answer me. I could feel her trembling in my arms. She fluttered like a little bird who is held in a deadly grasp. I could hear her throbbing heart beats. I repeated my question.

"I will tell you tomorrow," she said.

But I was sure she would accept my offer. That night I went home drunk and mad with love. My God! I have never been in such an ecstatic state. I revelled in her loveliness in my dream-visions. And I dreamt of her when she would be my bride. I would live for her love. I would intoxicate my senses with her love. I have never looked upon a woman like that before. But now! I was a brute man, hungry for the love of this woman.....

I dreamt of that day when I would introduce my bride to my people and bring her into our house. I imagined her in my studio, she looking at the rows of volumes which lined the book cases, and at the pictures, framed, and hung on the plastered walls. Then I would turn to her and say:

“You must take a passionate interest in my work as I do. You must help me. You must live for me as I will live for you. You must give me love for love. We two will build a glorious house, and to me you will be a lovely silver bride for ever. I want you and I want comfort in my house and I want

children by you. I long to hear their laughter and all this only you can give me!.....

My God! These were wild, impassioned dreams!

The next day I went to my cousin, where she was spending the week end, for her answer. She came to me, dressed all in yellow. Still the fierce sapphires glinted from the pale tips of her ears, still there was the fringe on her forehead of the pale gold hair and the thick Persian curls clung about her ears. We sat on a sofa, next to each other. I asked her for her answer. A deep blush suffused her pale face; her eyes danced with pleasure, and she said:

“Yes.”

I held her hand in mine and said:

“I hope I will make you very happy. God give me the strength to do so.” And then I was gone, dreaming dreams of my marriage—a home, a wife, and children.....happiness, comfort, family love, that was what marriage meant to me.....So I had won my love and my silver bride. As I drove away, she stood leaning on the varandah to wave to me..... and I heard a peal of Christmas bells.....

The next day on the Boxing Day, I met my father alone in the Library to tell him I had chosen a bride. I gave him her name. He said I had chosen a daughter of some obscure man. He could not give me his consent until he had satisfied himself about the girl's family and her own character.

That afternoon I saw her again and we talked of the clothes she should wear on the wedding day. I wanted her to be all in white, my little silver bride ! But she, with a woman's capriciousness insisted upon wearing pink. And I wanted her to be crowned on that day with a crown of orange blossoms, frail, lovely flowers ! And I wanted her to hold some Madonna lilies in her hand. From her bare head, I thought a thin, vague veil of lace should fall right up to her satin clad feet. Thus I would take my little silver bride..... We danced. I held her in my arms with a burning passion and we danced an exquisite dance of love and longing.....That was the last time I ever saw her and yet when I held both her hands in mine, I did not know that I would never see her again. Fiery

glances of passion shot from her eyes. With a last look towards her, I was gone.

The next day my father actually set out to make inquiries about my little silver bride and her family. Oh, it was so callous and cold blooded, all this inquiry ! He came back in a rage, fuming and frothing, asking me whether I had gone mad to take the daughter of an adulterer ? He gave me a list of the father's disreputable conduct and wound up by saying that the girl herself was of a bad character and that she promenaded by night with Eurasian boys on the Lands' End. I said I would take the girl even if she were a harlot. But the old man fumed and said that my circle of friends and relatives would laugh at me for marrying a common woman and making a *mèsalliance*. As if I cared for the laughter of the world when I had my little silver bride by me ! And the old man told me that he would never receive the daughter of an adulterer and that if I married the girl I was to leave the house and go and live in the streets. That finished everything. I loved the girl madly but I could not face the hard ships of existence. I could not



go and sweat for any being—no, not for any woman! There is no such thing as ‘love and a bread of crust’ or ‘love in a cottage!’ You must face realities. I want money at the back of my happiness. I could not go sweating for even my little silver bride, running about in odious tramways and grimy third class carriages. If I could not take the girl with my father’s money I must leave her. I know you will think me a contemptible cad.”

Here for the first time Sir Richard Lyndhurst interrupted his friend:

“No, my dear boy!” he said stroking him gently on the shoulder, “I don’t think you are a contemptible cad but a pitiable weakling!”

The Indian continued:

“I wriggled out from the engagement like a miserable worm. Oh, God! I hate myself for that! I am horrible! I have broken the girl’s heart. I did not even have the courage to face her and my people did not let me see her so I sent her word by my cousin. What must she think of me? She is the only woman who can appease my brute hunger of love and I have lost her through my folly

She is gone and now no one can take her place. Even if I go and marry another woman in a callous way and she bears me children, yet the image of my little silver bride will haunt me!"

"You ought to have fought for her."

"I did, but once my father says 'no' it is, impossible to make him say, 'yes' "

The strains of the orchestra floated by. "Hay! Hay! Farmer Gray!" The two men on the verandah were silent. There were tears in the Indian's eyes. He was looking at the Bunder at his feet, silent and desolate in its golden splendour. The moon was hidden under a thick sable cloud. The golden shadows of the powerful electric bulbs fell on to the deep blue lapis lazuli waves of the sea.

The Indian turned to his friend:

"I believe I will never marry again. She was all in all to me and I have lost her..... I will never marry again..... marriage, a little silver bride, family love, children, the comforts of home are not for me!"

He stifled a rising sob and then both the men were silent.

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# **THE LETTER.**

**TO CAPT. T. N. TIKKU.**

## THE LETTER.

**I** do not know what conclusion you will draw after reading this letter. I beg you, my dear friend, not to think too hard of me; but to bear me in your mind with your usual kindness, to think of me as you have always done. I pray that your affection and love for me may not be lessened in any way after the reading of the epistle, but on the contrary that it may increase after you know my sentiments for you. You will either take me for a depraved Radical or a madman, who looks upon women as chattels for the pleasures of men. I am neither of the two. I look upon you as my ideal of womanhood, pure, lovely, beautiful, an ethereal fairy come down to us from the filmy regions of the Heavens. And yet knowing all this, I am asking of you one thing which you will presently know—something which you can

grant me at the sacrifice of your scruples and religious ethics—if you have any—and perhaps at the cost of your frail heart strings. Above all, my dear one, you must not think that I hold you cheap and because of that I am writing thus to you. I have told you that you are my ideal of womanhood, and ideals are priceless pearls for which men dive in the sea of life and sometimes, very seldom, find them in their exquisite shells; but often, very often those men who dive, have just a vague vision of these pearls of ideals but they can never find the shells. Dear one, my beloved, you are all in all to me—you are like the air, sweet, pure air that I breathe in, you are like the light of the sun unto me and as the pale, white light of the moon; you are like the fierce fire of life unto me and like the crystal pure water—you are the very breath of my existence, my joy, my being.....

“You will recollect that it is now over some years since we met. It was on Christmas day that I first saw you. As you stood in front of me in your white dress with your lustrous coils of hair falling about your shoulders, you looked like the angel of my

dreams. Your eyes were all on fire, your lips were tremulous, as you looked unto me. you wished to say something and yet you left your say unsaid; it was just as well; your hands trembled in my grasp; you looked so fragile, fragrant, intoxicating and seductive, like the blossom of the magnolia or the champak. As I looked at you then, years ago now, on that Christmas day, I thought to myself that you and only you would be my woman, my mate, my mistress. You were ethereal and glorious and a halo seemed to shine about your head. You were innocent and you were a virgin; you were life's very essence, and yet, oh my beloved ! I thought of you with the evil thoughts of seduction. The Devil was in me and he prompted me: "Seduce this woman ! She is glorious clothed, but naked she is just an ideal vision. Seduce her. Enjoy her virginity !" And thus, like the Devil's own disciple, I looked up to you.

"You are my Ideal of womanhood and I do not want to break that with my hammers of lust and evil, but on the contrary, I want to strengthen it, to preserve it, to embalm it with my depths of love and lust. I look upon you as

something so precious and wondrous and yet I have thoughts of lust. It is not to enjoy your body for a few fleeting moments—it is to enjoy you for ever that I thus write to you. What will you think of me, what will you take me for, when I tell you, oh my beloved, that I want you as my mistress ? You are sacred to me as nature herself and I offer to make you my mistress. This is not because I think that you are cheap or that my wealth will tempt you or that you are like those painted prostitutes who dwell in the hearts of the cities and allure the men with shameful words. Learn, my dear friend, that I have a perfect horror for that conventional institution recognised by the State and the Church as Marriage. I loathe it, I abhor it. Marriage to me is repugnant. To take a woman in marriage is like taking a woman in bondage, to turn her into an entire slave for an eternity, until something happens to her or her lord dies. But by making you my mistress and my mate, I offer you unlimited liberties and freedom that your sisters do not dare even to dream about. By marrying you either with the blessings of the priests in the sacerdotal temple or in the Register Office I

will turn you into my chattel and my slave, without any freedom, merely a woman to obey my commands. As my mistress you will be free either to love me or to leave me, as your conscience dictates to you. I want to make you my mistress because I love you, because you are my very being and I cannot marry you and bind you to me by a legal bond for ever. Nor can I hold myself to be responsible for my actions towards you in the future. We will live as others live. We will be like other married couples, tasting of life, eating of the forbidden luscious fruits, according to our moods. We will have what the married couples do not possess, unlimited freedom. You will please yourself if you leave me with a moment's notice. I will only satisfy myself if I go away from you when I think that you are only a cumbersome anchor, a hindrance to me. We will build a glorious house not on frail, every day conventionalities but on naked, solid facts. We will hold the present in the hollow of our hands and the future will unveil herself at the proper time. You will be like my wife to me without being bound down to me. You will thus be better off than your sisters



who are married to other men; they will look upon you with fierce envy and they will singe you with their fiery tongues and call you a prostitute. But to me you will be like the woman you have always been—lovely, beautiful, pure. You will not lessen in my respect for you; on the other hand I will put you on a pedestal higher than ever and drape you with silks; you will be worthy of all my love and respect as you will hit conventionality in the face and throw her rules to the winds; you will sacrifice your body to my whim.

“My idea of a beautiful woman, up to the time that I saw you, was a tall woman, exquisitely formed, slender, and of the pale almond tinted complexion, with just a tinge of red to remind one of shimmering ivory and pink rose petals. But you are more beautiful than even my old dream of a beautiful woman. There lurks wondrous intoxication in your lithe, small, figure, which somehow reminds me of those anointed Grecian youths about whom Catallus would have sung vivid odes and Nero would have gazed at them, his emerald at his eye. Your black, luminous

eyes are seductive with their lustrous fires ; they are the most expressive eyes I have seen. Do you know that they betray your heart's every word ? The scent of your thin, jet black hair is choking ; it is more sensuous than the scents of the champak or the roses. My God ! You are so beautiful !.....

“ The other day an Indian potentate entertained me to a nautch dance. We reclined on soft, low divans, covered with spangles inlaid on the khinkhab, and through the hazy blur of the smoke, which we exhaled from our silver hukkas, I saw the swaying form of the dancing girl. The rings on her fingers and the bells on her toes clashed with the jingle of her armlets as she danced to the rhythm of a soft strain played on the zithers. The quivering voice of the vina trembled with a maddenning ecstasy whose tone agitated my soul strangely. The nautch girl was young and her body was not yet completely formed. She danced naked save for a thin strip of green cloth, worked with gold, which clung around her slender thighs, fastened by

a silver girdle, in the middle of which gleamed a large, rotund sapphire. She was prepossessing, calm, and beautiful. The fact that she was dancing naked before men did not disturb her equanimity. She is so used to her art. This dancing girl is a virgin. To seduce this virgin would have been like plucking a rose of intoxication and then throwing the crushed petals to the winds. She was so wonderful in her innocent beauty. The desire came unto me to force her body to my wishes of lust. Such a desire of passion hath come upon me often. It comes suddenly whenever I see a woman with beautiful rounded breasts. But I have not yet gone to a brothel to buy a prostitute's love nor have I hitherto had a mistress. But if you, O my beloved, should refuse to become my mistress, I will go to a brothel and from there I will take a prostitute to live with me. That will be as sacred as a marriage and will have all its glorious liberties.

"I have longed for beautiful women just as much as I have yearned to have by me curious objects, boxes of the sandal, whose perfumes are so sensuous ; carvings of ivory and jade ; precious stones, topaz, oniz, sapphires and cornelians, blood stones and rubies and corals ; Persian rugs on which the epic of the kings is traced in silk ; beds carved out of ebony with ivory pillars ; fierce chargers who make you think as if you were riding on Pegasus ; ferocious hounds who would tear your foe to pieces and then drink the blood.....

" Oh, that moment when I can call you my mistress—when you would belong to me ! I long to touch your body, to caress your body of the pale ebon colour, to pass my hands through your black hair—Oh, to call you mine, thou, oh my Spirit of Delight, Jewel of my Love. You have the face that Correggio would have adored and Leonardo da Vinci would have longed to paint. You have the smile sometimes on your lips like that mysterious, unfathomable

smile of Monna Lissa. You are beautiful, so beautiful.

“If you think that I am worth all your love and affection, then come to me and may nature part her lips in a smile and may the birds quiver and the trees tremble with joy. Otherwise do not see me for I could not bear to see you after confessing all this, after writing to you. But bear me always in your mind. Think of me as you have always done. If you love me, come to me, come to the other end of the world with me. I will take you where you command me. Come to the snowy peaks of the Himalayas and we two will live in the filmy regions of the clouds like eternal lovers; or come with me to the marbled and frescoed pavilions of the Queen Nurjahan, at Shalimar, in the vales of Cashmere, where Beauty is young and eternal. There you will feed me with the petals of the Mogul roses, richly crystallized and cooled with

flakes of snow. Or come, oh my Spirit of Delight, Jewel of my Love, to the burning sands of Araby. There let us wander side by side on the barren, fiery ground and let us long for love and all things human. Whatever we do, wherever we be, oh, let us be human—let us love and let us live and let us learn. But let us only be human ".....

**SIN.**

**TO HARINDRANATH CHHATOPADHYAYA,  
A POET AMONGST POETS.**

## SIN.

**H**IS yellow face, which was like old parchment, was distorted with pain and he lay writhing on a low, hard, wooden bed. His lips were dry and parched. His eyes were like carbuncles. He was in a raging fever, and yet he was in his senses. He lay on the plank with his eyes open and looked vacantly at the white ceiling and then revolved his gaze at the bare walls of his cell, until his eyes fell on the huge frame of an enormous man who sat near him, silently praying and counting his beads. The sick man held in his hot hands a little cross which hung round his throat and at times he mumbled his prayers. He was dying, slowly dying.

“My son,” said the holy Abbot, who sat near the death bed, “my son, make your peace with thy God for before long you shall be with Him.”



But the dying man sobbed. He was Brother Silentius.

"My son," said the holy Abbot, "you should rejoice for you will see Our Lord."

But yet the monk sobbed and then he said in a voice that quivered with fright :

"Father, Father, I am afraid to die and my heart is heavy with desire."

"Be not afraid of death, my son," said the holy Abbot to the monk Silentius "for thou wilt go where God is."

But Silentius gazed at the Abbot through his tear-dimmed eyes and said :

"My heart is heavy with desire."

The Abbot looked calmly with his serene, blue eyes at Silentius and counting the beads of his rosary, said :

"My son, tell me what you desire before you die. Hide nothing from me. Open your heart's secrets to me and I will comfort you."

Silentius rose from his wooden bed and looked straight at the Abbot. He gazed at the holy man in a perplexed, dazed manner. His lips twitched and his emaciated figure shook violently. He spoke in a voice so soft

and weak that the Abbot could hardly hear him.

• "I am afraid to speak of my desire to you, Father."

"Be not afraid. Speak to me, my son, so that I may comfort thee before you join Our Lord in Heaven."

"Will you forgive me, Father?"

"Is your desire of the Devil, my son, that I should forgive you?"

But Silentius did not reply. He buried his hot, fiery face into his hands and wept with shame. The rosary fell on the floor from the hands of the holy Abbot who looked at the monk Silentius with something akin to fear and yet he said to the dying man:

"Speak, my son, speak to me."

Silentius looked at the holy Abbot and wept and then hanging his head down, said in a voice that trembled with emotion:

"Father, the desire of a woman hath come upon me. I have vowed unto the Lord to shun lusts and I have foresworn women but I long to look upon a woman's naked figure in all her beauty—to caress her form, to feel the warmth of her body, to revel in the loveliness

of her breasts, to cover her mouth with hot, passionate kisses and to crush her in my embrace. Oh, Father, before I should die let me love one woman, just one woman. On silent nights when I have wandered in our garden and when I have seen the trees quiver in an ecstasy of delight and when I have heard the wind moan, I have longed for a woman. When I have been lonely I have sorely wanted a woman. I have buried my head in shame and have asked the Lord to forgive me but yet the desire to love a woman hath come upon me. Father, for the love of Him, give me a woman before I die."

The Abbot heard the strange words of Brother Silentius and he could not speak. The horror of the dying monk's wish tormented his soul.

Silentius wrung his hand in agony and implored the Abbot.

"Father! Father! for the love of God give me a woman before I die."

The Abbot rose from his seat in horror. His face was the colour of ashes and he was shaking with anger in every limb of his body.

"Son of the Devil! Do not blaspheme! Thy path is straight to Hell, oh unfortunate man! The Devil has entered your soul. You

have polluted the house of God with your leprous soul. You have sworn a false oath by the name of Our Lord. ”

“ Father, my dying wish !—give me a woman for the love of God !” But the holy Abbot was stricken with horror and rushed towards the door of the cell, with his hands on his ears.

“ Speak not, son of the Devil !” said the holy Abbot, “ make your peace with thy God.”

But Silentius was sobbing with pain in the intensity of his agony.

Just then, a vague, shimmering, white light entered the dark regions of the cell and a strong voice was heard by Silentius and the holy Abbot :

“ Father Honestius, thou holy Abbot of the Monastery of Our Lord, go thou to the city and enter the Streets of Delight and bring thou a woman so that Brother Silentius should fulfil his wish before he dies. ”

Silentius looked upon the ethereal light and heard the strange voice speak. A smile played upon his lips and he wept no more. The holy Abbot was transfixed and he could not move from the door.

"Fail not, Abbot Honestius, to make this dying man happy," continued the strange voice of the Spirit.

The Abbot, trembling and pale white, left the cell. Then he went forth from the Monastery of Our Lord and walked onwards the path towards the City, looking ahead of him, his rosary in his hands. He entered into the heart of the City and came unto the curved streets, the Streets of Delight. He passed small white-plastered houses from where came the songs, soft and beautiful of the women. He saw on either hand of him, women, sitting in shameless postures, near the doors, alluring the men with words that promised enchantment. They laughed unto him but the holy Abbot walked on through the Streets of Delight. Then he entered a small house of white plaster and green shutters and in the gateway young and beautiful girls greeted him with smiles on their lips. There were girls from Athens, milk white and slim, and Circassian women with perfect bodies and sensuous mouths; and the Numidians with bodies like the blackest ebony and blood red lips; women clad in transparent veils and women, half

naked with their hair falling on their shoulders ; women painting their lips, and women gazing on their jaded faces with jewelled mirrors; women drinking intoxicating liquids, cooled with flakes of snow, out of rotund cups of the thinnest jade, and women lying on heaps of silken cushions. The Abbot looked upon them with fear in his eyes and hate in his heart. They laughed and mocked unto him and said :

“ You old man ! Have you come unto us to preach ? Away from our sight or we shall spit unto you and defile you with our tongues ! Or have you, oh old man, come to enjoy the exquisite pleasures of our bodies ? If so, thou art an arrant old hypocrite ! ”

Then a toothless old hag entered and struck the Abbot in the face. She was the keeper of these young shameless women.

“ Away from my house, thou old humbug ! ” cried the woman, “ my young women are not for such as thee. ”

“ I have come, ” said the Abbot, “ to take away one of these women, who know not the fear of God, to the house of a dying man, whose wish is to sin before he dies. ”

The prostitutes laughed until tears dropped from their painted eyes.

"Oh, the exquisite sinner!" they cried and they yearned to go to him but the holy Abbot took with him, the girl who was the first to offer her body. She was a Circassian. The beauty of the day and the loveliness of the night were in her. So she followed the holy Abbot from the house of pleasures. Those who walked the Streets of Delight saw the prostitute with the Abbot and they stoned the holy man in their rage and spat upon him and spoke words of hate. But still the Abbot walked on, his head upright, with the rosary in his hands. And the laughing harlot walked after him.

Silently the Abbot Honestius took the harlot to the Monastery and into the cell of the dying monk. He opened the door and pointing towards the wooden bed, went away.

Silentiuss rose from his bed and his body quivered with emotion. He sought the woman with desire in his eyes and lust in his heart. He looked upon the beautiful harlot and she looked unto the monk with a strange light in her eyes.

When she stood naked before him in the beauty of her rounded limbs with her black, long hair falling about her, Silentius wept for sheer joy. Her ivory body was slim and well formed. The smile of the day was on her lips. Her jet black eyes shone like stars. She was bewildering in her beauty.

Later, Silentius was dead, his head buried deep between the breasts of the woman. The harlot rent the cell with her heart broken cries. He was her first love. She knelt by his bed and sobbed, her black hair falling about her naked body. That was how the holy Abbot found her and the monks who had come to pray by the dead man's side.

"Away from my sight, thou wanton woman" said the holy man, "Silentius has gone to the Devil."

But the Earth rocked with ecstasy and the skies burst forth into innumerable fiery flames and the trees shook with delight till the very leaves dropped off from the branches and the fields turned a deep green and the birds sang with joy and Mankind was happy for God had received the soul of the monk Silentius into His arms.

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